

A group of five diverse children are forming a human pyramid on a grassy field. At the top is a young girl with dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and light blue shorts, smiling. Below her are two children: a girl on the left in a blue t-shirt and a boy on the right in a red t-shirt, both smiling. At the base are two more children: a girl on the left in a green t-shirt and a girl on the right in a blue t-shirt, both smiling. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

THE UTAH SPECIAL

EDUCATOR

September 2007 • VOL. 28 NO. 1

RTI and the Utah ABC Triangle:
Matching Instruction to Student Need

The Utah Special Educator
September 2007



Utah Personnel Development Center

The Utah Special Educator is published by the
Utah Personnel Development Center,
Carriage Hill Office Building, 2290 E. 4500 S.,
Suite 220, Salt Lake City, Utah 84117,
(801) 272-3431, in Utah (800) 662-6624,
www.updc.org.

The Utah Special Educator is a publication of
the Utah Special Education Consortium. The consortium
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The purpose of *The Utah Special Educator* is to serve as a medium for the
dissemination of information, promising practices and other dimensions in the
provision of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. *The Utah Special
Educator* is also available online. All views and opinions expressed represent the
authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Utah Personnel
Development Center, the Utah Special Education Consortium, or the Utah State Office
of Education. The Utah Personnel Development Center is a project funded through
the Utah State Office of Education to the Utah Special Education Consortium for
a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

ON THE COVER:

Responsiveness to intervention (RTI): Matching Instruction to Need for All,
Some and Few. Introduction to the Utah RTI model for professional
development through the UPDC for improved student outcomes.

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Special Monograph: Spotlight on the Spectrum—Deadline December 14, 2007

Educating the Whole Child—Deadline January 22, 2008

Celebrate What Works—Deadline April 1, 2008

The Utah Special Educator accepts manuscripts, artwork and photographs on
topics related to improving educational outcomes for school-age individuals
with disabilities and learning challenges.

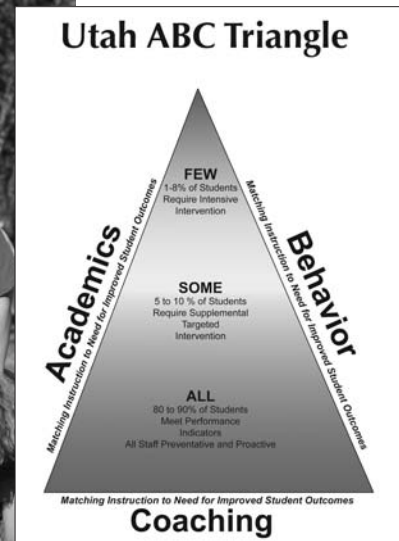
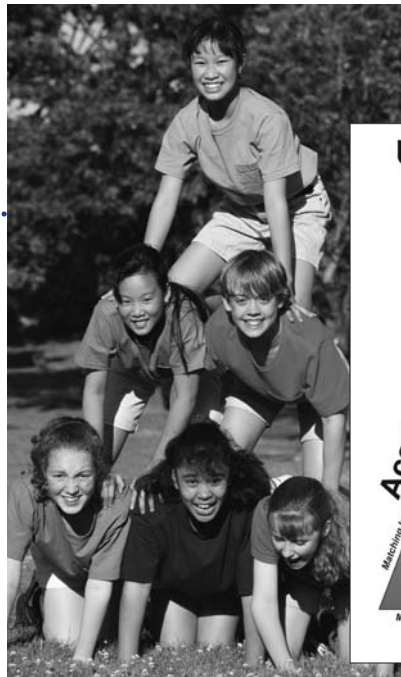
Submission guidelines and checklists for contributors are available online at
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to assisting contributors in the successful completion of manuscripts.

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Phone 801-272-3431, or 800-662-6624 (in Utah)

The Utah Special Educator is a symbol of the leadership of Dr. R. Elwood Pace
whose vision made the Consortium, the UPDC and this journal possible.

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On the Cover:

RTI and the Utah ABC Triangle: Matching Instruction to Student Need

Utah Professional Development 2007-2008 Calendar

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Stay Informed: Access the Web-based Calendar

- Get up-to-date information on all CSPD activities and conferences
 - Link directly to on-line web sites for details and registration
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Instructions for getting there

- Enter <http://www.updc.hosted.webevent.com/cgi-bin/webevent.cgi>
- For quick reference to the calendar you'll want to save/bookmark this page!

From The Editors...



Michael Herbert, Editor **RTI: Triangle Fever for All, Some and Few**

Question: How many sides to a triangle, and why should we care?

Surprisingly, different states that are also working on RTI (and every state is!) respond differently to the above question. All states address literacy in their RTI model, and most address behavior.

Specifically, these two concerns are mentioned in the IDEA reauthorization. Both of these are essential, and are reflected in the research regarding student achievement. The Utah model of personnel development presented in this journal includes all three sides that are required to address improved academic performance for all students.

The “third” or base of the triangle represents the quality of instructional practices that correlate with the largest impact on student achievement. Coaching is presented as the method to insure the fidelity of teaching implementation that is observable, measureable and “coachable.” In his seminal book, *What Works in Schools, Translating Research into Action* (2002), Robert Marzano analyzed thirty-five years of academic achievement research and organized these data into three sections or major factors that affect outcomes. Although Marzano did not present his data as a triangle graphic or mention RTI, all of his findings are prominently represented in the triangle model presented in this issue. These include:

1. School-level factors
2. Student-level factors.
3. Teacher-level factors

Student-level factors are “generally associated with student background” (beyond the control of educators), and include the home environment, learned intelligence, background knowledge, and student motivation. Evidence suggests that these aggregate factors are important, but account for the smallest effect size of the three factors of student achievement.

School-level factors are “primarily a function of school policy and school wide decisions and initiatives.” These include a guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and feedback, parent and community involvement, safe and orderly environment and collegiality and professionalism. The most highly effective schools (as measured by these factors) foster student achievement that overcomes the effects of student background (student-factors).

By a wide margin, teacher-level factors represent the most powerful correlations with student achievement. Teacher-level factors are

primarily under the control of individual teachers, such as specific instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and classroom curriculum design. Educators take heart; what you do and how you do it is the single most important factor associated with student academic achievement. Consider these data as reported by Marzano, p. 73.

Figure 8.2

Cumulative Effects Over Three Years Between Students With Least Effective Versus Most Effective Teachers

Most Effective Teacher	83 Percentage Point Gain
Least Effective Teacher	29 Percentile Point Gain

It is with this research in mind that the Utah Personnel Development Center presents the Utah Triangle of matching instruction to student need. The UPDC and its journal, *The Utah Special Educator* is committed to fostering and teaching WHAT WORKS and those strategies that have the greatest impact on student achievement for all students, including all of the all, the some and the few. RTI is for ALL.

Please steal some time from your impossibly busy schedules to read about and discuss RTI and related issues with your peers. This “next big thing” is not really new, is here to stay and it is time for us to continue this important work of closing the gap between the achievement of our highest and lowest performing students.

The mark of a great school is not how high the highest performing students perform, but the size of the gap between the highest and lowest performing students. The November issue of the *Educator* will continue the discussion of RTI, and share state, district and school examples of RTI and tiered instruction that works for all students. ■



Just Let Me Teach... **Ginny Eggen, Co-Editor**

Although I no longer teach students in a classroom each day, I still operate under the traditional academic calendar where the first of August signifies the end of the relaxed days of summer. It is hard to wind up initially, but I gain energy as I spend time with other educators preparing for a new school year. It is energizing to think about new ideas that may mean better results for students. Something I’ve always loved about being in the business of education is the fact that I’m always learning; I never feel like I have it all down.

Continued on page 6

Editors...

As I remember the early days that I spent teaching, I recall that in many ways I really enjoyed closing the door and working in the realm of my classroom with my students. I think that one thing that No Child Left Behind has engendered is the idea that the students are no longer “ours,” they belong to the school. There is much more scrutiny about the progress individual students are making—and as a result, the effectiveness of individual teachers. I’ve had conversations with many teachers who resent this increased critical gaze at their practice. I empathize with the sentiment I often hear, “Just let me teach!”

The best antidote that I’ve experienced for easing such resentment is working with colleagues who are in the same boat to figure out how to make the improvements that are mandated. I’ve heard it said that we only change if we first feel some discomfort and are challenged to grow. I’ve been amazed at results I have observed throughout Utah when educators assemble to collaboratively look at data in a professional way.

We are excited in this issue of the *Utah Special Educator* to focus on how tiered instruction can be successful by implementing what we call the ABC Triangle. I personally am most involved with the C part of this triangle—coaching. Coaching allows individual teachers or small groups to learn from actual classroom experience by generating the inquiry and reflection that is necessary to improve the complex practice of teaching. This means opening doors, that because of habit, many teachers are more comfortable keeping closed. However, by opening doors to peers who have been trained in coaching for improved instruction, it is our belief that educators will experience growth and their students will demonstrate improved outcomes. We hope more teachers will say, “Just let me teach...while you watch and help me learn!” ■

Steve Kukic, VP, Sopris West

When PL 94-142 passed in 1975, the federal government had many incredible challenges. Suddenly, all eligible students with disabilities were guaranteed a free, appropriate, public education.

The question was: How does a school district decide which children are eligible and which are not? The answer came in a set of eligibility criteria which were intended to distinguish students with disabilities from those with other special needs.

The most mysterious of the first disability categories was specific learning disabilities (LD). This category was to include those students who exhibited unexpected underachievement. The draft regulations were issued in 1976 and included two major criteria: the IQ/Achievement discrepancy and the Exclusionary Factors.

The IQ/Achievement discrepancy was included to identify those students whose IQ would predict a level of achievement contradicted by the achievement measured by an achievement test. The exclusionary factors were included to rule out other disability categories and environmental factors as primary causes for the discrepancy.

In 1976, my former wife worked for the precursor of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), then called the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH). With another colleague, she traveled the country visiting LD researchers to try to find a consensus to change the BEH developed draft regulations away from this complicated formula. Not surprisingly, she and her colleague found no consensus.

In 1977, the 1976 draft regulations were declared final. They were finalized, in my opinion, because they were there.

This began my fanaticism for the IQ/Achievement discrepancy. After all, it was a requirement. It appeared scientific. It provided a mathematical manipulation of scores. It had to be scientific.

It was kind of cool for a school psychologist like me. Clinical judgment paired with compared scores from the venerable IQ test and a vast assortment of achievement tests, this was heaven!

Or was it?

In California, *Larry P v. Riles* resulted in the prohibition of the use of IQ scores to determine the eligibility of African American students. Why didn’t we all pause and assess the appropriateness of the use of IQ scores? Were the California students somehow different?

I had it on good authority that in one large state, the definition of severe discrepancy was modified to comply with the state appropriation for special education to ensure that the number of students found eligible did not outstrip the funding available to educate them...this really did happen.

The technical characteristics of various IQ tests also caused an interesting phenomenon. If a score for a student on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Reading Ability is compared to a score on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Reading Achievement, there is less of a probability of finding a severe discrepancy than if one compares the score from the latest version of the WISC with the Woodcock Johnson Test of Reading Achievement. So, if a well meaning school psychologist wanted to help a student with special needs obtain special education services, the

Confessions of an IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Fanatic



latter mix of tests became the battery of choice. Still, we did not question the science behind the IQ/Achievement discrepancy.

I became Utah's State Director of Special Education in 1987. By then, the State Office of Education had spent thousands of dollars to make use of existing technology to fine tune the definition of severe discrepancy. I gladly continued to invest in this concept.

By the time I left in 1998, we had spent thousands more on a severe discrepancy disk (Estimator) to help Utah educators more accurately define a severe discrepancy between IQ and achievement. We used the most sophisticated regression formula available to ensure that the results of the comparison were trustworthy. Some of the greatest minds in the state diligently attacked this task over the years. As your state director, I was pleased to support this effort. We truly believed we were using good science to help our children and youth.

Then, in 2002, the National Research Council presented its analysis of the over representation of minority students in special education (by that time a national and pervasive phenomenon). One strong recommendation was to do away with the IQ/Achievement discrepancy. Still we used it. It was still the law after all!

As the 21st century continued to unfold, research was published to prove that the IQ/Achievement is not scientifically valid. Jack Fletcher's

research showed us that one could not differentiate if an IQ/Achievement discrepancy was caused by disability or poverty.

That did it for me. I could not call myself a professional and still be a fanatic about the IQ/Achievement discrepancy. This provision of IDEA reinforced a barely relevant (if that) concept, proven to be non scientific. Enough.

Then came the reauthorization of IDEA. By that time I was working at Sopris West and was the chair of the Professional Advisory Board for the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD). NCLD convened 10 organizations interested in LD to determine a consensual direction for changes in the LD portion of IDEA.

The consensus of the LD Roundtable was to work to eliminate the IQ/Achievement discrepancy as a criterion to determine LD eligibility. Two members of the Roundtable, NCLD and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), went to the Congress with statutory language to eliminate the requirement of the discrepancy in the LD eligibility process. Please, dear reader, note the two organizations. NCLD is a national leader in the advocacy for improved lives for people with LD. NASP is the advocacy group for us school psychologists!

And it worked. The discrepancy is no longer required. In its place, a district can use a process that determines the response of the student to evidence based interventions (RTI). RTI does not replace the total eligibility process, just the discrepancy component. Even if RTI is used as a part of the comprehensive evaluation, the exclusionary factors still have to be analyzed to determine if the primary cause for the resistance to interventions is something other than the presence of LD.

Friends, we must walk our talk. The IQ/Achievement discrepancy must be discarded in favor of a careful, responsible application of RTI. RTI gives us the opportunity to gather educationally relevant data about the child's response to valid interventions.

I truly do not like the old piece of advice: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" I prefer: "If it works, don't break it!" Shoot, I confess that I remained a fanatic for discrepancy for way too long. You know, the old cowboy was right when he said: "When the horse you're riding dies, get off!"

It's time to get off the aptitude/achievement discrepancy, let go and move on. Our students demand it! ■

The Future is

A Message from the State Director of Special Education

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the 2007-2008 school year. I hope you all had the chance to find time during the summer months to do the things you enjoy the most and to recharge your batteries for the year ahead. It is always exciting to begin a new school year; to look ahead at all that we, as educators, can accomplish together for students with disabilities. Each year we find more useful information coming out of educational research, and have more opportunities to turn that research into practice by implementing interventions for students that have been proven to increase students' skills.

So, what is the (near) future of special education in Utah? A comprehensive and coordinated Response to Intervention (RTI) system as the model for service delivery and prevention utilizing the framework of the Utah ABC Triangle (fig.1) which appears on the back cover of this *Special Educator*. Is that all, you might ask? Absolutely not, but it is a critical, effective foundation that we can help build for our students.

I am looking forward to we as special educators teaming with all of our educational partners to design and deliver, with fidelity, coordinated school-wide systems of effective tiered instruction and interventions (an RTI system) for all, some and few students:

Tier 1: Core Classroom Instruction (all)

Tier 2: Supplemental Targeted Instruction (some)

Tier 3: Intensive Targeted Intervention (few)

I look forward to the RTI model, including an intervention hierarchy, ongoing progress monitoring, research-based curriculum and instruction, and collaborative problem-solving as the Utah model for instruction and intervention. This model would be implemented for **all** students, matching the instruction to the need for improved student skills in academics and behavior.

Systems change is not an easy task, but it is always our responsibility as educators to find out what has been proven to positively impact student skills, examine our systems, make changes, practice those changes until we can implement them with fidelity and sustain those changes for a sufficient amount of time and on a sufficient scale to improve results for kids. This is a process that has to be dynamic and ongoing.

It takes not only the knowledge of effective intervention practices, but also effective implementation systems that support the necessary framework of instruction if we are going to turn research into results for kids. We have many promising practices happening in our Utah schools every day. That is why I believe that the work we have ahead of us can be accomplished and we can continue to improve results for our students.



Now

Utah ABC Triangle

Academics
Matching Instruction to Meet for Improved Student Outcomes

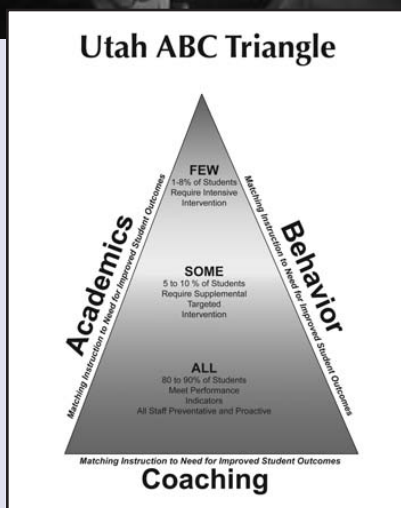
Behavior
Matching Instruction to Meet for Improved Student Outcomes

FEW
1-8% of Students
Require Intensive Intervention

SOME
5 to 10% of Students
Require Supplemental Targeted Intervention

ALL
80 to 90% of Students
Meet Performance Indicators
All Staff Preventative and Proactive

It takes not only the knowledge of effective intervention practices but also effective implementation systems that support the necessary framework of instruction if we are going to turn research into practice.



It takes not only the knowledge of effective intervention practices, but also effective implementation systems that support the necessary framework of instruction if we are going to turn research into results for kids.

The USOE and UPDC websites, as well as issues of the *Special Educator* are also being used to disseminate information and support materials. New Guidelines for Least Restrictive Behavioral Interventions (LRBI) and SLD eligibility are due out this year. These guidelines will align with an RTI system of instruction and interventions. We were just awarded a five-year federal State Personnel Development Grant which will build on previous statewide work initiated by the State Improvement Grant which ended in August. The USOE staff will be making a concentrated effort to coordinate the work of the various departments at the USOE in order to provide a more consistent system of supports for school districts and charter schools.

I am looking forward to supporting the work you do every day with students this year. I look forward also to the continued improvements in the students' academic and behavioral skills that you are working so hard to achieve. Thank you for the work that you do! ■

Myths

About Response to Intervention (RTI) Implementation



The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Myth #1: The outcome and intent of RTI is identification, and therefore special education remains its own entity that “occurs” subsequent to “trying RTI.”

There are two overarching goals of RTI. The first is to deliver evidence-based interventions and the second is to use students’ response to those interventions as a basis for determining instructional needs and intensity. Special education eligibility decisions can be a product of these efforts, but is not the primary goal. Using RTI as the data base

for making that decision, special education services (i.e., what does this student need?) are determined by the student’s rate of response to intervention and the size of the gap that exists between the student and the benchmark. As a result, identification is not about the student’s label, but rather about determining what interventions are most helpful in closing the gap in a timely manner. Special education services can be a means to providing effective intervention services for students, but are inherently linked to instructional efforts that occurred in general education. The delivery of special education programs is part

of an integrated service delivery system that is pictured as a circle (recycling on itself until success is found), not as a straight line, where special education programs are the last thing on the line (and sometimes a goal, or end in itself). The major issues in RTI involve the need to enhance the range and diversity of academic and behavioral interventions in general education (Tier I) and to increase the impact of supplemental interventions in Tiers II and III, not how to make eligibility decisions that divorce special education from general education.

Myth #2: Tier 3 (or the last tier in a tiered model) is only special education.

Tier 3 is the most intense level of intervention provided to students in general education. A student who does not respond to these intense interventions MAY qualify for special education services when it has been demonstrated that either the intensity or type of intervention required to improve student performance either exceeds the resources in general education or are not available in general education settings. Tier 3 in the conceptual model advocated by NASDSE and many other professionals is INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION, which may or may not include special education services. If Tier 3 is defined exclusively as special education, it is possible that additional intensive instructional programs would be set up OUTSIDE of the triangle model, which defeats the purpose of having the model for delivering services to all students.

Myth #3: The major focus of RTI should be identifying students with Specific Learning Disabilities (LD). RTI can be used to “get rid of” those students who are not really LD, but who were simply not achieving for other reasons.

If the primary focus of RTI is simply eliminating students who are not deserving of special education, there is a risk of missing the huge benefit RTI provides in prevention of disability. IDEA 2004 is clear in indicating that no single criterion can be used for special education eligibility, and most definitions of LD view response to appropriate instruction as necessary, but not sufficient. Data collected during RTI implementation can be used as one source of information when making eligibility decisions, but identification is an end product of RTI, not the primary purpose. In some states, RTI is viewed as part of the identification criteria for all students considered for special education, not just LD, which is consistent with the IDEA 2004 statute.

Myth #4: RTI is only prereferral.

RTI is more than prereferral services; it is a comprehensive service delivery system that requires significant changes in how a school serves all students. When thought of as a prereferral system, it remains the province of special education and the desired integration of general education and special education services around the goal of enhanced outcomes for all students will not be achieved.

Myth #5: Comprehensive evaluations do not change with RTI, so districts should continue to do traditional assessments.

RTI changes the nature of the comprehensive evaluation away from testing for eligibility to an organization of data already collected on the student's instructional progress for planning increasingly intense interventions. The draft regulations indicated that districts could choose RTI or a discrepancy model, but there is no point in a discrepancy model if RTI is in place.

Myth #6: The research base for RTI is limited to beginning reading. There are no research studies comparing RTI to traditional special education services.

A substantial body of research exists to demonstrate the impact of an RTI model on the current system (e.g., referral rates, risk indices) as well as student variables (e.g., achievement). Fewer studies exist on the long-term outcomes for students from both “models.” Regardless, there will probably never be research comparing different ways of reforming service delivery systems in schools because the question is not of great interest. The research base on beginning reading is substantial, but the research base on the use of problem solving models for students at risk for or with behavior problems is just as substantial. Analyses of outcomes in RTI implementations have improved outcomes in all students and shown reductions in referrals for special education. Although there is less research in math and in secondary schools, it is not correct to indicate that there is no research. There are large-scale implementations of RTI in real schools that involve multiple grade levels and reading, math, and behavior. The problem is one of scaling, which is a different research question than one invoked when we ask whether practices like RTI are effective or implementable.

Myth #7: No contemporary research including student outcome data are available.

In fact, there is research with student outcome data from a variety of models and the real question is why resources have not been devoted to organizing these data.

Myth #8: The over-riding RTI model is the 3-tier, general ed/remedial ed/special ed model, so states should adopt it.

This model exists, but is one of several frameworks for RTI. States should work with their stakeholders to decide what is best for them.

Myth #9: Tier 2 is short-term, not the 10-30 weeks that exists in many RTI models.

There is no formula for how long any intervention should last, especially if the student is making progress. The idea that the problem must be significantly impacted in 4-6 weeks, or special education is the route to go, implies that current implementations of special education are associated with improved outcomes, which may not be correct.

Myth #10: Because of “time to disposition” issues with longer Tier 2 interventions, the special education identification process will not fit into the RTI framework.

The evaluation timeline does not start until the referral is made and/or consent is obtained—depending on the state and consistent with the statute.

Myth #11: Move slowly because the status quo is not that bad. Some tweaking is needed, but RTI can support the “traditional but tweaked” model.

RTI is a dramatic redesign of general and special education; both need to change and the entire system needs reform if schools are going to make AYP targets and meet the needs of all students. Tweaking will not be sufficient. ■

RTI-Listen

Amber Roderick-Landward, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center



Over the last four years, *The Utah Special Educator* has featured at least one article per issue about Response to Intervention (RTI) with the intent to prepare educators to participate in a model that is likely to be the single best opportunity for improving outcomes for all students. It is no longer a matter of if your district is going to implement RTI, it is a matter of **when!** So listen up—these are the things you gotta know about RTI.

The Heart of RTI

The heart of RTI is matching instruction to student need. Though it sounds simplistic, it is a lot of work because it takes commitment, perseverance, and a lot of picking yourself up and dusting off because you will fall down. David Tilly (RTI practitioner Iowa Area 11) describes RTI as an evolutionary process because though there are specific components to RTI, it is not black and white. He states, “RTI doesn’t teach us what to think, it teaches us what to think about.” And the thinking about must always, always, always, be focused on matching instruction to student need.

The first step in implementing RTI is believing that ALL students can learn. Believing that all students can learn does not mean every teacher has a mission or vision statement that hangs on the wall saying those exact words. It means that when a student yet again reads the short vowel sound for the long, despite hours of targeted intervention and practice or when a student blurts out for what seems like the hundredth time, we as educators go back to the drawing board and problem solve what WE can do differently to increase progress. Once you are here, getting the other components in place is easy.

There are three components essential for the implementation of RTI:

1. Using a multi-tier model of service to deliver instruction and interventions (3 Tier Model)
2. Utilizing a problem solving methodology
3. Integrating data collection and assessment systems to inform decisions at each tier

People!

RTI ensures that all students have access to instruction and interventions. I, like most of you, chose to work in education because I wanted to make a difference and I have always believed that our work as educators makes a difference. But it was after my first year in the classroom that I realized that though I was making a difference for some, I wasn't making a difference for every student. RTI is the vehicle that will make a difference for every student. And it works because it doesn't leave any teacher to make a difference on his/her own. It is about ALL teachers and ALL students working together.

What RTI is Not

RTI is NOT a program.
RTI is NOT a special education initiative.
RTI is NOT solely about identifying learning disabilities and it is NOT about referral.
RTI is NOT easy.

RTI is NOT GOING ANYWHERE. This is not a fad or school reform du jour. It is what is right for kids and we CANNOT afford to NOT do this!

Yeah, But...

Yeah, but this is a lot of work! And this is not how we have always done things! We can give "yeah, but" excuses why RTI won't work in "my school" or "our district" or with "all students." But where will that get us? Before you "yeah, but" Consider these:

- Yeah but, which kids don't deserve evidenced based instruction matched to student need?
- Yeah but, who should tell the parents that we know what to do to help their child and we have chosen not to.
- Yeah but, what if it were your child?

Do we really want to go there?

Change is a Verb

Change is a verb and thus requires action. RTI is a change (A BIG ONE!) and therefore must have a DO component. It will not just appear or happen one day; it requires effort, patience, and persistence. Michael Fullan (1997) presented guidelines for action



in school reform change efforts in his book *What's Worth Fighting For in the Principalship* that apply to all of us in education.

- Avoid if-only statements, externalizing the blame, and other forms of wishful thinking.
- Start small, think big. Don't overplan or overmanage.
- Focus on fundamentals: curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional culture.
- Practice fearlessness and other forms of risk taking.
- Embrace diversity and resistance while empowering others.
- Build a vision in relation to both goals and change processes.
- Decide what you are not going to do.
- Build allies.
- Know when to be cautious.
- Give up the search for the "silver bullet."

RTI is worth fighting for! Remind yourself why you chose education and join the battle for doing what is right. I will see you on the front lines! ■

Daryl Mellard, Research Associate

As a result of the 2004 reauthorization of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public schools may now use new approaches to evaluate a child for specific learning disabilities (SLD). To help parents better understand both the traditional “aptitude-achievement discrepancy” approach, and the newer “responsiveness-to-intervention” (RTI) approach, and how each might affect their child, SchwabLearning.org asked Daryl Mellard, Ph.D., a principal investigator at the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, to answer some questions about the two approaches. The second article in this series discusses what parents can expect if RTI is implemented at their child’s school.

academic area at a level one would expect, in comparison to their achievement in other areas. These students had particular deficits, for example, a severe reading deficit, and at the same time showed remarkable strengths or high achievement in other areas. So, the central concepts were underachievement in a specific area of deficit, and strong abilities and skills in other areas. In 1977, when regulations were first adopted for implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; Public Law 94-142), the method by which SLD would be identified was a controversial issue. Consensus was eventually reached that we would assess students using the aptitude-achievement discrepancy approach, which became the “test” for underachievement in a particular academic area.



What was the original rationale for using the aptitude-achievement discrepancy method to identify specific learning disabilities (SLD)? Why has it been criticized in recent years?

It’s interesting to note that reading clinicians used the concept of “less-than-expected” reading achievement before the aptitude-achievement discrepancy approach was linked with SLD (e.g., Franzen, 1920; W.S. Monroe, 1921). Researchers, clinicians, and parents had noted a group of students who were not achieving in a particular

The discrepancy approach had advantages from an administrative point of view: The simplicity of the approach made it efficient. One could assess the level of a student’s underachievement by administering one or a few achievement tests and comparing a student’s scores on the achievement tests to his aptitude score. Such calculations offered an assumed level of precision that had appeal. Both the assessments themselves and the formulas for calculating the discrepancy could look pretty sophisticated, and in many ways they were sophisticated. In our desire to simplify the complex, labor intensive, and costly assessment

Basic Principles of the Response-to-Intervention Approach

process, aptitude-achievement discrepancy offered a solution! The model looked good on the surface.

However, in practice, researchers and educators made a terrible mistake in that they failed to realize the limitations of the aptitude-achievement discrepancy. From an SLD perspective, the model was clearly insufficient. A significant discrepancy between a student's aptitude and achievement only indicates the severity of underachievement; it is not a test of SLD. The research literature suggests that students with SLD **are** underachieving (Swanson, 2000), but not all underachieving students have SLD. A medical analogy might be helpful here. Elevated temperature is a common, measurable symptom of illness. We use a thermometer to check for the discrepancy between a child's temperature and what we consider a normal temperature, 98.6 degrees. All you can say about a child with a high temperature is that, first, he's "hotter" than expected, and further tests are needed to understand why his temperature is high; and, second, an intervention is likely needed.

From a parent's and teacher's perspective, this issue is significant because the scores in a discrepancy calculation do not inform us about any of the underlying basis for the child's underachievement. The discrepancy is a "product score." It's the product of a large number of influences, some of which are intrinsic to the student, such as, limited aptitudes for reading acquisition, short attention span, difficulties with pattern recognition, poor working memory, or low self-regulating or self-monitoring performance; and others that are part of the home, instructional, and curricular opportunities, including lack of exposure and practice with pre-academic skills such as rhyming words, inconsistent or insufficient practice with academic skills, lack of a sufficiently organized instructional environment, or changing schools and curriculum due to family relocations. From a teacher's perspective, understanding the basis of the discrepancy is not so important because the major concern is getting the student help beyond what is available in the general education classroom.

Too often in SLD assessments, one finds a discrepancy between a student's aptitude and achievement and jumps to the conclusion that an intervention is necessary. Insufficient time is spent trying to understand the basis for the discrepancy. So, significant errors are likely made in

people's good faith efforts to help. Because unless you have a good understanding of the basis of what's causing the discrepancy, you really don't know how to best help a child learn.

Could you describe how the "responsiveness-to-intervention" (RTI) approach to identifying a specific learning disability is supposed to work?

RTI has two applications. The first application is that of a **prevention model** to limit the amount of academic failure **all** students experience, not just those who have an SLD. Or, stated in a more positive view way, RTI helps to ensure that, at the first sign of problems, a student receives the academic supports he needs to be successful. The second application of RTI is **determining whether a student has a SLD**. Both applications are very important, but clearly the second application requires a higher degree of integrity and precision because the outcome—judging whether or not a student has a disability—has important life-long implications for that student and his family.

The fundamental RTI concept is that students receive the high-quality instruction and intervention that enables them to be successful. RTI involves frequent, ongoing classroom-based assessment of a student's progress in specific academic areas (e.g., basic reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculation, and written expression) and behavioral areas (e.g., attending to tasks, completing tasks on time, and appropriate interpersonal interactions). As soon as a student starts to lag behind his peers in any academic or behavioral area, he receives more intense instruction in that area. After a specified period of time, if he is still under-achieving relative to his classmates, in spite of more intense instruction, he is provided with an even more intense instructional intervention. So, RTI is designed to catch any individual child's under-achievement early, and to address the problem in a very individualized way.

One of the wonderful advantages to RTI is the broad application and benefit that is potentially available for **all** students. To illustrate with an analogy, we can think of RTI as similar to a public health model in which we have tiers of increasingly intense interventions for disease,

Continued on page 16

Response-to-Intervention

which we direct at smaller and smaller segments of the population. In public health, the large population gets wellness information on how to stay healthy and receives basic, broad vaccinations. That's the first or "primary" tier of intervention. In spite of this primary tier of intervention, however, some members of the population might get ill. Or, we might discover as the result of large-scale screening of the population, that some people need more specialized treatment. This level of specialized treatment is considered the secondary level of intervention, which is not for the general population, but for a smaller segment of maybe 10 to 15% of the total population. Even within this second-tier group, though, some persons, 5% or so, are going to need further, very specialized interventions. This highest level is referred to as the tertiary level of intervention and is, by its design, the most intense and likely the most costly level of intervention.

RTI can work as the public health model applied to students' school performance. School staff provides a high-quality education for all students and conducts screenings to ensure that everyone is benefiting from that education. For students whose academic screening results suggest that a closer look—including a more refined/specific assessment—and a more intense intervention is needed, the schools will have procedures to ensure that the appropriate services are provided, and that the student's progress (or lack of progress) in response to that intervention is monitored.

Is there research to support RTI's effectiveness in identifying and providing academic interventions for kids with SLD?

All students benefit from having instructional and curricular approaches that are closely matched to their current individual level of functioning and need. That's an essential feature of RTI, which makes it a wonderful model of instruction. The research has demonstrated through a number of studies (Mellard, Byrd, Johnson, Tollefson, & Boesche, 2004) that an RtI framework can benefit youngsters by addressing academic difficulties in an individualized and timely way.

On the other hand, we don't have good data yet on broad application of RTI as a model for identification of SLD. We lack data on how effectively and reliably RtI works for SLD determination. When the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities at the University of Kansas solicited nominations from school districts of schools implementing exemplary RTI practices, most of the schools about which we received information were using RTI in a prevention model and not as an approach specifically aimed at determining which children had SLDs. And we have almost no data yet on how RTI models might work in middle schools or high schools. Further, we are limited to RTI models that focus on reading interventions in primary school-age youngsters. Some research is emerging on students whose difficulties are in

math, but those findings come from research settings, not school-based adoptions. So schools that adopt the RTI approach will be developing those models on their own.

Some advocates of the RTI approach suggest that the information obtained from RtI assessments is sufficient for SLD determination. As mentioned earlier, when a youngster has completed multiple RTI intervention tiers, and the interventions have had minimal success, the instructional and diagnostic staff (e.g., school psychologists, reading teachers, or language therapists) does not yet know **why** the implemented interventions were unsuccessful, or **which** interventions might work. To garner that important information, other assessment approaches will be needed, including extensive histories on health, development, education, family education data, information processing abilities (e.g., working memory, attention, sensation level, and self-monitoring), and overall intellectual capacity.

On the surface, a well-designed, rigorous RTI implementation should have great benefits. Almost any assessment model that looks at youngsters across time is clearly superior to just a snapshot of a child's performance for a single moment in time, which is what a school's multi-disciplinary team gets when they administer a series of standardized tests. How well we can scale up the research-based RtI models into general education classrooms remains to be seen. The challenges and potential benefits are significant.

What are the shortcomings of the responsiveness-to-intervention approach?

As I mentioned earlier, as yet no controlled studies have been conducted on how RTI works for SLD determination, on the implementation of RTI in any setting above elementary schools, or on a comparison of cost effectiveness or broad-scale application, in multiple districts or across time. This latter question will likely be particularly difficult to answer because schools are very dynamic settings. The dynamics of schools change as staff turns over, new curricula are adopted, instructional grouping is reorganized, or other federal (e.g., No Child Left Behind), state (e.g., high-stakes testing), or local initiatives compete for attention and resources.

Another concern is that our view of the essential nature of disability within the context of public education will change. We have variation already across schools and districts about which student characteristics are considered to constitute a disability. Many of the desirable features of RTI, such as classroom level screening and progress monitoring, could also undermine the current assumption that a learning disability is a unique condition with a particular constellation of student characteristics, which requires a specific kind of intervention. This could



allow general low achievement due to low socio-economic status or other environmental influences to become a more dominant factor in disability determination. If we change our view of the essential nature of SLD from the historical focus on students with unexpected underachievement, to a focus on students with generalized low achievement in spite of high-quality instruction, we should be clear that such a shift is acceptable.

What aspects of the discrepancy approach to identifying learning disabilities might be useful to retain?

That's a tough question because conventional wisdom, numerous researchers, and even federal political appointees have criticized most everything that looks like any form of the discrepancy approach. On the other hand, anecdotally, the students I know who were referred for evaluation because of academic problems, and who evidenced a significant discrepancy between aptitude and achievement in a specific academic skill (e.g., word recognition or reading comprehension), needed intense interventions. So the evidence of the discrepancy was helpful in confirming the presence of a significant academic problem, and, in comparison to the RTI models, was quick to obtain.

Another consideration is that discrepancy formulas that look at differences among achievement scores or particular abilities can help pinpoint particular areas of concern. For example, we can calculate if

the difference between a student's reading recognition scores is reliably different from his reading comprehension scores. We use a variety of assessments in our comprehensive evaluations, and looking at a profile of scores can help us determine if one set of skills is significantly stronger or more deficient than another set of skills. We make those profile comparisons using some form of a discrepancy formula. In this application of discrepancy we have a consistent and objective standard for judging differences among a student's scores. As a parent, you may find such information helpful, but you must also recall that the formula does not provide a good explanation for **why** one score might be significantly lower than another score, or **which** intervention might help to improve the learning or performance. If parents understand the basics of how the discrepancy approach and RTI work, they'll have a clearer idea about what the school's assessment can actually tell them about their child's strengths and needs.

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Daryl Mellard, research associate, Center for Research on Learning's Division of Adult Studies, and principal investigator with the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities. ■



Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier system developed primarily for use with school-age children that is gaining widespread acceptance in schools throughout the country. RTI systems help teachers organize the way in which they gather information and deliver instruction to respond to children's learning difficulties. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the use of RTI with younger children (three to five-year-olds), largely because some young children show signs that they may not be learning in an expected manner, even before they begin kindergarten. However, RTI within the context of early childhood (e.g., Head Start, child care, public and private pre-kindergarten programs) is considered an emerging practice.

What Are the Origins of RTI?

In education, the origins of RTI typically are traced back to initiatives in the field of learning disabilities. The emphasis is on shifting focus away from the discrepancy model, which requires demonstrating a discrepancy between a child's aptitude and achievement, toward early intervening. Early intervening prevents or addresses learning difficulties as soon as problems appear rather than waiting until a child experiences school failure and is referred for further evaluation and possible placement in special education. In public health, multi-tier prevention and intervention systems also have been proposed. These systems share features similar to RTI systems proposed in education.

What Does RTI Look Like in Practice?

There is no single agreed-upon model of RTI, but, in general, RTI has three components: (a) the use of a research-based core curriculum and effective instruction for all children; (b) a set of standardized interventions that have been validated through research for some children who need additional instructional supports; and (c) an assessment system that includes universal, periodic screening and progress monitoring to guide decision-making in each tier. Some RTI models also include a problem-solving process to support data-based decision-making.

Is There Support for RTI?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included RTI as one option that schools can use to identify students with learning disabilities and allowed local education agencies to use Part B funds to develop these services for children in kindergarten through third grades and beyond [2004; see Sections 614(b)(6) and 613(f)(1)]. A research synthesis on RTI concluded that there is an emerging body of empirical evidence to support claims that RTI is an effective method for identifying children with learning difficulties and for ameliorating or preventing the later occurrence of these learning problems in school-age children (Coleman, Buysse, & Neitzel, 2006).

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Response to Intervention (RTI) In Early Childhood: An Emerging Practice

What Are the Implications of RTI for Early Childhood?

Today there is an increased emphasis on helping children acquire key school readiness concepts prior to kindergarten. Some children will require additional supports to learn, even when teachers use an effective curriculum and intentional teaching. Existing multi-tier models designed primarily for children birth to 5 years of age that focus on preventing secondary disabilities and delays and promote access to the general preschool curriculum are congruent with the principles and practices of RTI (VanDerHeyden & Snyder, 2006). Future research is needed to develop and evaluate the assessments, practices, and decision-making criteria associated with RTI that will guide its implementation in early childhood programs. Ideally, multi-tier systems designed for children at-risk for learning difficulties will be coordinated and integrated with existing early intervention and early childhood special education systems that focus on children who meet special education eligibility criteria. Early educators can begin to incorporate elements of RTI by building on effective assessment and intervention practices that already exist in high quality early childhood programs.

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An e-newsletter especially for Division for Early Childhood members
August 1, 2007, Volume 1, Issue 3*

*To learn more about RTI:
<http://www.nclld.org/content/view/1002/389/>*

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References are available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center ■

Sign Language for Hearing Toddlers– Speech for Deaf Toddlers:

A Fascinating Dichotomy

J. Freeman King, Utah State University

Theories regarding language learning have historically taken many interesting twists and turns, some well-founded, others bizarre with a tendency to the avant garde. The end goal of whatever theory has been espoused is communication: the ability to share meanings. The latest phenomena to hit the American scene related to language acquisition and learning is the use of sign language to enhance the overall language development of hearing babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Conversely, there is a push, mainly by substantive oral-aural organizations, certain psychologists, audiologists, and speech language pathologists, and money-seduced university administrators to promote speech, but not the use of sign language, for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are deaf. Herein lies the dichotomy: eliciting the use of another sense (vision) and sign language to promote language development in the hearing child, yet prohibiting the deaf child from using a visual language in order to develop meaningful, shared meanings. In essence, the deaf child is being penalized for their weakness (hearing), instead of promoting their strength (vision).

If, in fact, as research has demonstrated, the use of sign language does promote speech development and provides a bridge to English language development in children who can hear, would it not be logical to assume that the use of sign language in deaf children would also be a viable bridge to the English language in children who are deaf? Even though American education champions bilingualism in hearing children, why does it in the same breath take away such a possibility for deaf children? Is it not logical and linguistically savvy to play to the child's strength and not their weakness?

Linguistic competency is a necessity for human interactions. Language is necessary for the flow of information between children; between children and their parents; and between children and their teachers. Language is used to develop and enhance cognitive skills, to develop literacy, and to develop social and emotional skills. It is the pathway to intellectual growth, and essential for involvement in the entirety of the educational experience. Hence, the idea that sign language can be another avenue to assist the hearing child in learning and utilizing language. Sign language is a tool

that can be used to promote speech and English language competency in hearing children, even though speech is the primary method through which the English language is produced. Is it not putting the cart before the horse when speech, which cannot be heard or impartially heard, also becomes the primary tool for the deaf child through which language is accessed and produced?

Research has shown that sign language (for both hearing and deaf infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) provides the earliest possible mode through which children can learn expressive language skills and open the door to shared meanings. The reason for this is that children begin to learn language long before they are physically capable of producing speech. While speech capabilities are still maturing, children struggle to find ways of expressing their wants, desires, and intentions. Given exposure to a visual language of signs, children are able to master language at an earlier stage. Signing children can communicate, while their peers are frustrated when parents or other significant others can not comprehend their communication attempts.

Common sense, as well as research, has illuminated much related to language acquisition and language learning:

Early language learning experiences affect other areas of development that are critical to children's future success. Language can positively or negatively impact cognitive, social, and psychological development. Poor language skills are often linked to academic difficulties, behavioral problems, poor self-esteem, and social immaturity. Behavioral problems are often the end result of children's frustration at not being able to communicate with their parents or significant others. Yet, research shows that children with strong language skills, regardless of the language, consistently outperform their peers on tests of intelligence and other measures of success. The language might be English or another spoken language, or it can be sign language; the key is language accessibility of a deep and meaningful nature. The earlier a child acquires his/her first language, the greater the success will be in acquiring language skills and meeting other important developmental goals.

All children (hearing and deaf) can benefit from the use of sign language, with no risk to academic, social, or emotional development, or spoken language skills. For both hearing and deaf children, sign language gives a head start in language learning, and can lead to higher achievement in measures of intelligence, academic and social development. Used in classrooms with hearing children, sign language has been shown to assist in reducing the achievement gap between underprivileged children and their peers. It is also important to note that there is no substantial body of research that indicates learning and using sign language will hinder the development of speech skills.

development, children's knowledge of sign language opens the door for involvement with a strong and supportive community of other deaf individuals.

Hard of hearing infants, toddlers, and preschoolers often fall through the cracks of the educational system, because of the erroneous assumption that they are primarily auditory learners. Even hearing losses so minimal that are diagnosed as being within normal limits have been shown to have significant negative impacts on children. The less significant the hearing loss, the smaller the chances of having the loss identified early. After the hearing loss is identified, technological assistance and/or added speech training are hard pressed to compensate for a profound inability to fully access spoken language in a deep and meaningful manner. For these children, sign language provides the only bridge to fully accessing language. It also serves to provide access to the critical element of incidental learning.

Technology, even though it can be a useful tool, does not necessarily assure the expectations espoused. A child with a cochlear implant or one who uses hearing aids, at best, is hard of hearing. Maintenance issues, programming/adjustment issues, and restrictions as to when and where technological devices can be conveniently and safely used can create problems. The use of sign language is a viable solution to these problems. Sign language can be utilized before audiological supports can be properly fitted and/or programmed for children. If children are able to develop spoken language skills, the use of signs should be continued to complement spoken language, especially when the need for communication is immediate and spoken language becomes inadequate due to difficulties with the technology, poor acoustics in the environment, or other extenuating factors.

The question naturally will be raised, "Is sign language the right choice for every child?" Certainly, only the child's family can make this decision. However, keeping in mind that the deaf child (with or without a hearing aid or a cochlear implant) is primarily a visual learner, it seems only logical to play to the child's strength, vision, and not his/her weakness, hearing. Historically, many deaf children have been placed in oral-aural only programs, then transferred to signing programs when it

was discovered that they were not oral-aural candidates, and were not able to access language. Perhaps, all deaf children should be initially placed in signing programs, then switched to oral-aural programs, if they are failing. It is safe to say that very few would be switched to oral-aural programs due to failure to access language. Why can the child not be given the best of both worlds: the opportunity and the ability to use sign language, when appropriate, and the opportunity and the ability to use speech, when appropriate.

References are available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center ■



For deaf infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, sign language is a critical first step to communication, and the key to eventual development of literacy in English and, possibly, spoken language skills. It provides the only accessible venue for natural and complete language acquisition in the early years, and serves to prevent deaf children from becoming victims of the staggering language delays often associated with deafness. Deaf children who learn sign early as their first language generally learn to read and to write English better than those who are exposed only to spoken language, and it is an established fact that expressive language ability, in any mode, is often one predictor of the development of speech. Beyond the enormous advantages to deaf children's language, social and cognitive

Toddlers

Meeting the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students



Data recently released by the publication, *Education Week*, indicates that Utah has the highest high school graduation rate of any state, 83.8%. All students, parents, and educators who worked extremely hard to accomplish this achievement deserve our congratulations.

Yet, in the midst of this laudable and noteworthy achievement, there are some troubling statistics in the report as well. While 88.6% of our Utah White student population is graduating from high school, only 62% of our Native American, 79.4% of our Asian/Pacific Islander, 65.5% of our Black, and 61.7% of our Hispanics student population is

doing so. Although the percentages are similar and even slightly higher in some instances in comparison to the national percentages for diverse learners, these percentages are alarming and need our immediate focus and attention.

These statistics are especially alarming when we acknowledge that Hispanics represent the largest proportion and fastest-growing segment of immigrant children in the U.S. and that the pattern continues through second, third, and subsequent generations.

When we consider the following, the issue becomes even more urgent:

- Utah has been classified as one of the new gateway states for those leaving other countries to enter the U.S. to live.
- The percentage of Whites in Utah is declining while the percentages of Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians are growing. Latinos now make up 10.6% of the population. Utah ranks 12th in the nation in the percentage of the population that is Latino.
- Researchers have predicted that 140,000-150,000 new students will enroll in Utah's schools within the next decade. Many, if not the majority, of these students will be culturally and linguistically diverse students. Since 2000, seven of every 10 new students in Utah were culturally and linguistically diverse. Some schools and school districts in Utah now have a majority minority population.
- Utah has the highest fertility rate and the youngest population in the U.S. Latinos have an even higher fertility rate and a younger population. Although Hispanics are 14.4% of the total population, they are 22% of all Americans under 5.

Given this great influx of immigrants into our school system, we must be prepared to provide adequate and appropriate services. Research suggests that assessment tools and referral processes may

often be biased, and therefore, contribute to the occurrence of over representation (and at times, an under representation) of culturally and linguistically diverse learners identified as requiring services (Hosp & Reschley, 2003). Special educators, school psychologists, and speech/language pathologists must be knowledgeable about issues related to language and culture including second language acquisition and bilingualism/biliteracy (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Baca & Cervantes, 2004). Special educators occupy a pivotal position to advocate for diverse learners to guarantee that they are assessed appropriately and then provided with effective and appropriate instruction. In order for this to occur, the value and importance of a diverse learner's first language (and/or dialect) and culture must be recognized. This means much more and goes much deeper than surface activities like hanging up flags and having cultural fairs although these activities should still occur. Educators need to intentionally incorporate first language and culture into the actual learning process.

Unfortunately, bilingualism has become a political issue rather than a pedagogical (teaching) based on research issue. Educators must not get caught up in this trap if we are to effectively serve our diverse learners.

Although generally known in the education arena, some facts bear repeating over and over again until every preservice and practicing special education specialist, speech language pathologist, school psychologist, general education teacher, superintendent, principal, reading specialist, ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, and counselor knows them and applies them when assessing and planning instruction.

Language and Cultural Differences

- Language and culture are assets and resources rather than deficits.
- Language is a human and civil right.
- Cultural differences extend beyond language.
- Students don't leave their first language and culture behind when they enter the school doors.
- Diverse learners are not *blank slates*. They enter school having a rich history of culture and first language.
- Dominant language and language proficiency mean two different things.

Difference vs. Disorders

- Language difference does not mean language disorder. Rules for conversational interaction vary from culture to culture. For instance, in some Native American cultures it is considered rude to say something right after someone else. Instead it is polite to allow a silent period to digest what was said and to demonstrate respect for what was said. If there is a language disorder, it must be apparent in both languages.

- Symptoms of second language acquisition and disorder can be similar (e.g. syntactic errors), but the causes and implications are different.

Teaching ELL Students

- It is easier to learn new information when it is presented first in one's primary (native) language.
- Skills transfer from one language to the other (e.g. a child who knows how to read does not need to learn to read again in the second language).
- Some committed errors can be attributed to transferring what is known in the first language to the second language. For example, a Hispanic student may pronounce *it* as *eat* because *i* represents the e sound in Spanish.
- Children, even those who qualify for special education, can learn more than one language.
- A bilingual child's vocabulary will consist of words known in the first language and words known in the target language (in this case, English)

Teaching Culturally Diverse Students.

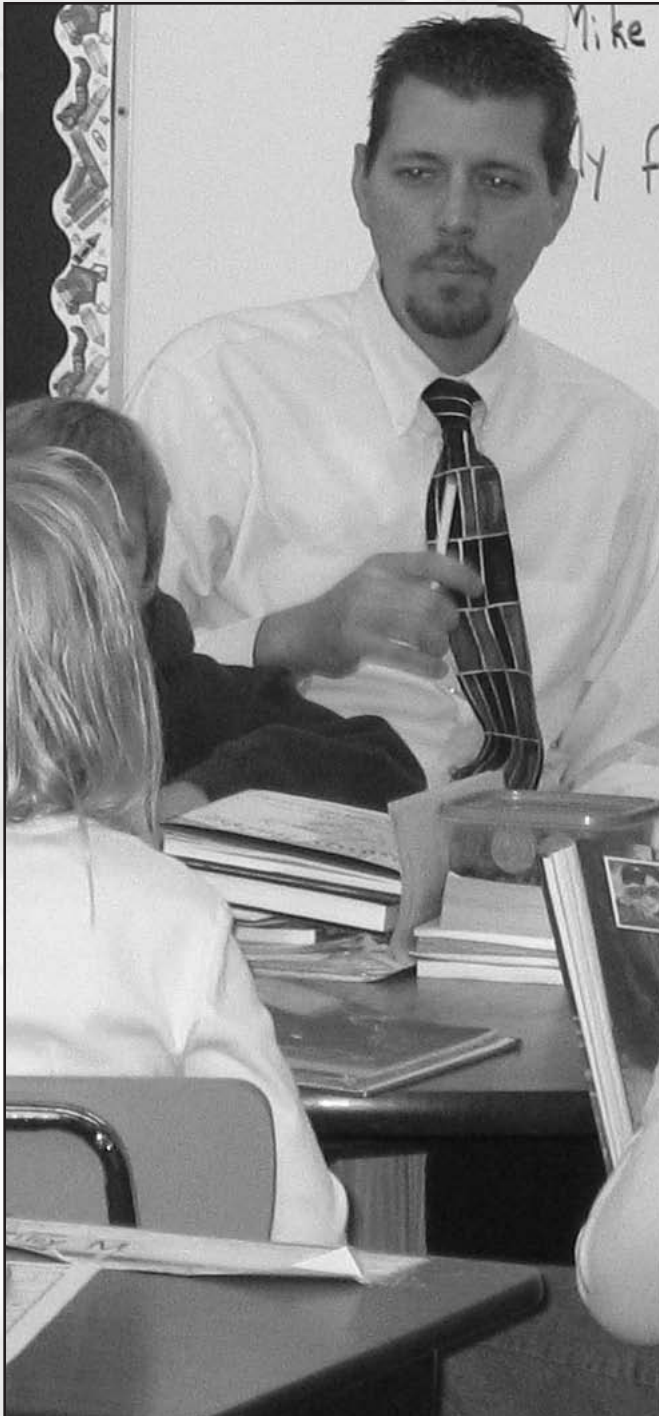
- The acculturation level of a student (and family) can influence learning and therefore, needs to be determined. For example, a student at the "honeymoon level" when everything is new and exciting will respond to learning in a different way than a student at the "cultural shock" level when everything is irritating and bothersome.
- Families are a valuable resource for information about the student in a different arena such as in the home and the community
- It's important to have a "cultural broker," someone who knows both the culture of the student (and the family) and the school culture to share information both ways that may be a cultural conflict.

In future issues of *The Utah Special Educator* we will explore each of the above bullets by providing more specific and detailed information educators can use to better meet the academic needs of our diverse learners.

References are available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center ■

RTI for ALL, Including A.L.L.

Michael Herbert, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)



Is RTI a structure that holds promise or peril for English Language Learners (ELL's), and students with other language-based needs (Academic Language Learners)?

A Tale of Two Children

Carlos is nine-years-old, and has just started school in a small to mid-sized school district in Utah. It is evident to his teacher that he performs far below his non-ELL peers in academics, especially in language arts. He speaks English when spoken to in the classroom, but mostly with one-word responses or in short, choppy sentences. Most of the time, Carlos is silent in class and never raises his hand when the teacher calls for responses to questions. Carlos is falling further behind in the general curriculum with each passing day.

Marty is also nine-years-old, and is in the same class as Carlos. Marty has lived in the same neighborhood as his school from birth, and is an English-only speaker. Like Carlos, Marty never raises his hand to answer teacher questions, and his vocabulary is simple and less descriptive compared to his peers. Like Carlos, Marty is also struggling and failing to keep up in the general curriculum.

In the "old" system of regular education, English as a second language (ESL) and of special education, Marty and Carlos may be referred to a separate placement for help. Carlos would be tested for his English Language proficiency (mostly oral language) with a test such as the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT, commonly used in Utah), and if found to be limited in his English proficiency, placed in an ESL classroom for one or more periods per day for the help he needs. Marty may be referred to special education by the general educator, therefore entering the legal cycle of referral—assessment—and possible qualification and placement in special education. A comprehensive evaluation following referral to special education takes time, is expensive, and withholds systematic intervention from students for weeks, even months.

For both students, their trajectory would be similar with the net effect of the child receiving different or special services, most often in another setting, and most often by a teacher or professional other than their regular teacher. Often, services may also be delivered by someone who is not the most highly skilled educator to address their specific curriculum and instructional needs. Problem—placement—service. Services in the ESL classroom would be determined and delivered by the ESL endorsed teacher or paraprofessional, and may or may not address or reinforce the difficulty that Carlos is experiencing in the general curriculum. For Marty, an I.E.P.

would be developed, and then services delivered by the special education teacher or paraprofessional. In both cases, alignment with and making progress in the general curriculum are not assured. Services in both settings, however appropriate, may not be more intensive than what they received in their regular class, and in fact, may be of lessened intensity. In some schools, students may be pulled from their regular education literacy block and given “other” services during that same time. While not universal for all districts and all schools, this scenario is common and without universally positive outcomes for the students it is designed to serve.

Enter RTI

Fast forward to these same two students, same teacher and same school that have reorganized around an RTI model of increasing student achievement for ALL children. First, responsibility for referral of children who are not on grade level or who are not making adequate progress would not fall to the parent or regular educator. Referral would be involuntary for any child struggling to make adequate progress; in other words, an automatic trigger. The difficulty with parent and/or teacher referral is that days, weeks, even years may go by with little progress. In an RTI model, **all** children in **all** grades would participate in grade level benchmark assessments in the first weeks of school. In the content area of reading for example, this is often accomplished using a curriculum-based measurement such as DIBLES (widely used in Utah). This benchmarking takes only minutes per student and all students in all grades in that school participate. Results are processed and entered into a computer database, which graphs, charts, and provides educators with comparisons to grade standards. Students are “sorted” and those needing immediate assistance are identified.

In a school that practices RTI, both Carlos and Marty would be identified as needing assistance early in the school year, and the general education teacher would add extra interventions in Tier I immediately. These would take place in the general classroom, and generally would be characterized as increased intensity. Increased intensity may include:

1. Increased number of minutes of instruction/practice per session,
2. Increased number of sessions per week, and
3. Decreased teacher/student ratio.

The teacher would take some simple data often (progress monitoring), plot this on a simple chart/graph, to see if the Tier I intervention is making a difference. If not, the teacher may refer Carlos and Marty to the school Student Support Team (SST, TAT, CHAT...) who will examine all relevant data (school records, grades, CRT...) and make recommendations for Tier II interventions. Tier II increases intensity of instruction, and the cycle of assess-teach-assess continues. Carlos and Marty are not removed from their developmental literacy instruction; Tier II is in addition to what their peers are receiving. At this point, decisions regarding intervention and additional services of the school are offered to both students, as each are evidencing difficulty in the general curriculum. In this scenario, services are not offered as an afterthought of place, but based on educational need. Services are delivered from the most qualified, gifted literacy teacher, and not by the teacher whose name is on a door of a particular placement. RTI is a service, never a place!

With RTI, students similar to Marty and Carlos never have to wait until they fall so far behind that a parent and/or teacher refers them for additional instruction. Carlos will receive targeted instruction for literacy difficulties due to his limited English proficiency. Marty will

also receive targeted, explicit, systematic instruction due to his lack of progress in the general curriculum. Student need, not political or legal placement will determine the timeline and services to be delivered. Progress will be judged by objective data collected frequently during frequent progress monitoring probes. Lack of progress would trigger reconsideration of the data by the team, and increased intensity of intervention in addition to what is already taking place. Both Carlos and Marty will receive Tier I, Tier II, and perhaps Tier III if they fail to respond to quality interventions, applied with fidelity.

RTI is not just for reading problems

Problem behaviors are linked to academic weaknesses. In the above tale of two children, substitute behavior difficulties for literacy, and institute a school-wide system of Positive Behavior Support (PBIS). Implement the four positive behavior supports of: 1. Identify the expected behavior, 2. Teach expectations, 3. Reinforce, and 4. Correct. Screen all children for behavior and social difficulties and intervene early for those who need it. Provide appropriate interventions, take data, and increase the intensity of research-evidenced interventions as dictated by the data. When a student cannot read, teachers teach them to read without placing blame on the child or their family. When a child evidences behavior problems at school, teachers should refrain from placing blame and teach them.

Quality of Instruction, and fidelity of implementation is the key

The curriculum (commercial series or program) is rarely the cause of academic failure. With the advent of NCLB and other educational mandates, schools **must** use scientifically based, research-evidenced curriculum. This includes data and research that a given program works for all children, including English Language Learners and those with diagnosed disabilities. Often at issue is the fidelity of program implementation. Teachers cannot take “bits and pieces” of a research-based program and apply these differently with other elements and expect the same results. Sadly, this occurs all too often. Sometimes, this is due to lack of adequate professional development for teachers. Also possible and more likely, is the issue that most schools lack observation and feedback opportunities for all teachers, not just those in their probationary period. Most schools, sadly, are not organized around a professional learning community, but act as a loosely organized set of independent contractors. Coaching, and there are many models of coaching, is the key to the fidelity of implementation. The purpose of coaching is to improve teacher behaviors, which have a direct and positive impact on student outcomes.

RTI is for ALL Learners, including A.L.L. (academic language learners). Lack of academic language proficiency is a major contributing cause of school difficulty for children and adolescents who require differentiated instruction for language differences and disabilities, including English Language Learners, students with disabilities such as specific learning disabilities, young children just acquiring language, and children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) and the Utah State Office of Education are co-sponsoring the RTI for A.L.L. Conference Sept. 27-28. For information: www.updc and click on the conferences page. ■

Slap! Colby's hand came down hard on the word the literacy paraprofessional had just put on the table on the front of him. "That's right, Colby," she affirmed, "'Boot' has the same vowel pattern as 'moon.'" The game progressed around the table while Colby's non-disabled peers took their turns slapping the word if it matched the guide word or leaving it alone if it didn't match. After the 20 minutes of word work, the students regrouped for a guided reading session. The general education teacher guided the

his general education teacher and paraprofessionals differentiate research validated instruction in small ability groups. Colby also receives targeted supplemental instruction to his guided reading group. Instruction for Colby is further specialized with intensive interventions based on his IEP. Behaviorally, Colby responds to the school-wide behavior supports that are in place—with the exception of coming in from recess. As a result, he receives targeted behavior interventions that are designed to increase his proficiency in meeting school behavior expectations.

All Students Fit in the RTI Triangle

What Response to Intervention Means for Students with Significant Disabilities

students through the first four pages of their new book while Colby's paraprofessional helped him read the same pages. He had already worked on reading the words the day before in his special education class and did fairly well. The paraprofessional took note of the words he missed to review with him later in the day. When they went back to class, Colby remembered to follow all the school rules, even remembering that it's not okay to look into other classrooms as you go down the hallway. His teacher was pleased and gave him a "Leopard Paw" to put up on the bulletin board by the office. A peer tutor helped him pin it to the board and gave him a high five for earning it.

Colby, a student with low verbal ability and a significant disability, has not just been getting around his school—he's been moving through the Response to Intervention Triangle. Part of his day is spent accessing the core curriculum in language arts where

Colby moves around so much on the triangle because it represents exactly what its name implies—"Response to Intervention." There is an enormous response variability from child to child and from task to task. Everyone belongs in Tier I, the ALL section of the triangle, unless the data deems otherwise. This all results in the need for a model that is fluid and highly sensitive to individualization. RTI is that model. Often when educators hear the term "Response to Intervention," they think of it as an alternative method for qualification of a specific learning disability. But in reality, the overriding mission of RTI is to match instruction to student need to improve outcomes for all students, including those children with significant disabilities. It is among other things "a commitment to use the best findings from our current research as we go about our instruction and a commitment to use...data based decision making or problem solving" in modifying that instruction to ensure it's effectiveness for our students (Tilly, 2007).



The design of the RTI model is a useful way to think about the way we structure our interventions for students with significant disabilities. We might think of our Tiers as increasing layers of support.

- Tier I Academics represents Research Based structured, systematic instruction that applies to the majority of students with significant disabilities.
- Tiers II and III Academics represent additional or more intensive interventions that may be necessary for some students.
- Tier I Behavior represents the school wide and class wide preventative and proactive strategies that include “explicitly taught expectations, reinforcement and acknowledgment of following expectations, and systematic correction and re-teaching of behavioral errors.”
- Tiers II and III represent targeted behavioral interventions and may include Functional Behavioral Analyses, and Behavioral Improvement Plans.

Data based decision making is a feature of Response to Intervention. Teachers of students with significant disabilities already understand the importance of data collection in program determination and on-going modification of instruction.

The sides of the triangle will not stand without a solid base. This base is comprised of administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals trained in the most effective, research based instructional strategies. The Utah RTI model includes the base of a Coaching Model of staff development. Research on adult learning shows that training consisting mostly of a presentation of theory or theory with modeling will result in only a 5-10% likelihood of actual application. Practicing the strategies will increase the application to 10-15%, but a coaching strategy will result in a 80-90% likelihood of application. (Joyce and Showers, 1980; Bush, 1984). It is sound research based ideas, thoroughly learned and faithfully implemented that result in improved outcomes for students.

As we continue learning about Response to Intervention this year, we will want to remember it is a model for ALL students. Students with significant disabilities will find their places throughout the triangle and their teachers will find valuable information and exciting ideas to help them progress in every tier. ■

RTI and Reading

Amber Roderick-Landward, Program Specialist,
Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)



Is RTI all about reading?

The short answer to this question is NO. RTI is about matching instruction to student need and doing what is right for ALL kids academically and behaviorally. The reason RTI appears to be focused on reading is because the consequences for not being a proficient reader are grave and we have years of research that have told us what works, so it is often the most logical place to start. Alarming statistics have created an even greater sense of urgency for utilizing an RTI model for reading. The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) indicate that more than eight million students in grades 4–12 read below grade level. What is perhaps worse is that these low reading levels have remained stable since 1971. Research in early literacy tells us that students who are poor readers in the primary grades remain poor readers into

high school and are at higher risk for academic failure and dropping out of school (Juel, 1988). Proficient reading is also indicative of life outcomes. The twenty-five fastest growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the fastest declining professions have lower than average literacy demands (Barton, 2000). Children living in poverty have the greatest risk as more than seventy percent of fourth grade students from low income families cannot read or comprehend even simple texts (Lyon, 2001).

Over six million students receive special education services. Roughly ninety percent of students receiving services are identified as having a “high incidence disability” which includes specific learning disability (SLD), speech and language impairment, emotional disturbance (ED), and mild mental retardation. Approximately fifty percent of students are identified as SLD

and of those students, eighty to ninety percent exhibit problems with literacy based skills—reading and writing. Many of these children are receiving special education services, an estimated forty percent, because they were not appropriately taught (President's Commission of Excellence in Special Education, 2002).

Yikes! Any questions? If you are feeling that pit in your stomach, take that as a sign that you care. Focusing on reading to improve student outcomes makes sense doesn't it? Teaching a child to read may be the most important thing you do for that child and for our society.

Utah's Reading Efforts

Utah has felt this sense of urgency about reading and is committed to preparing and supporting Utah's educators in meeting the needs of ALL students through a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Across the state, schools and districts are working hard toward providing evidence-based instruction in a 3 Tier Model and using data to make educational decisions. To aid in these efforts, the Utah Personnel Development Center and the Utah State Office of Education have supported schools and districts through the implementation process by providing national and local expertise through various training opportunities and initiatives. We have faith in Utah educators and their ability to make a difference and we want to help!

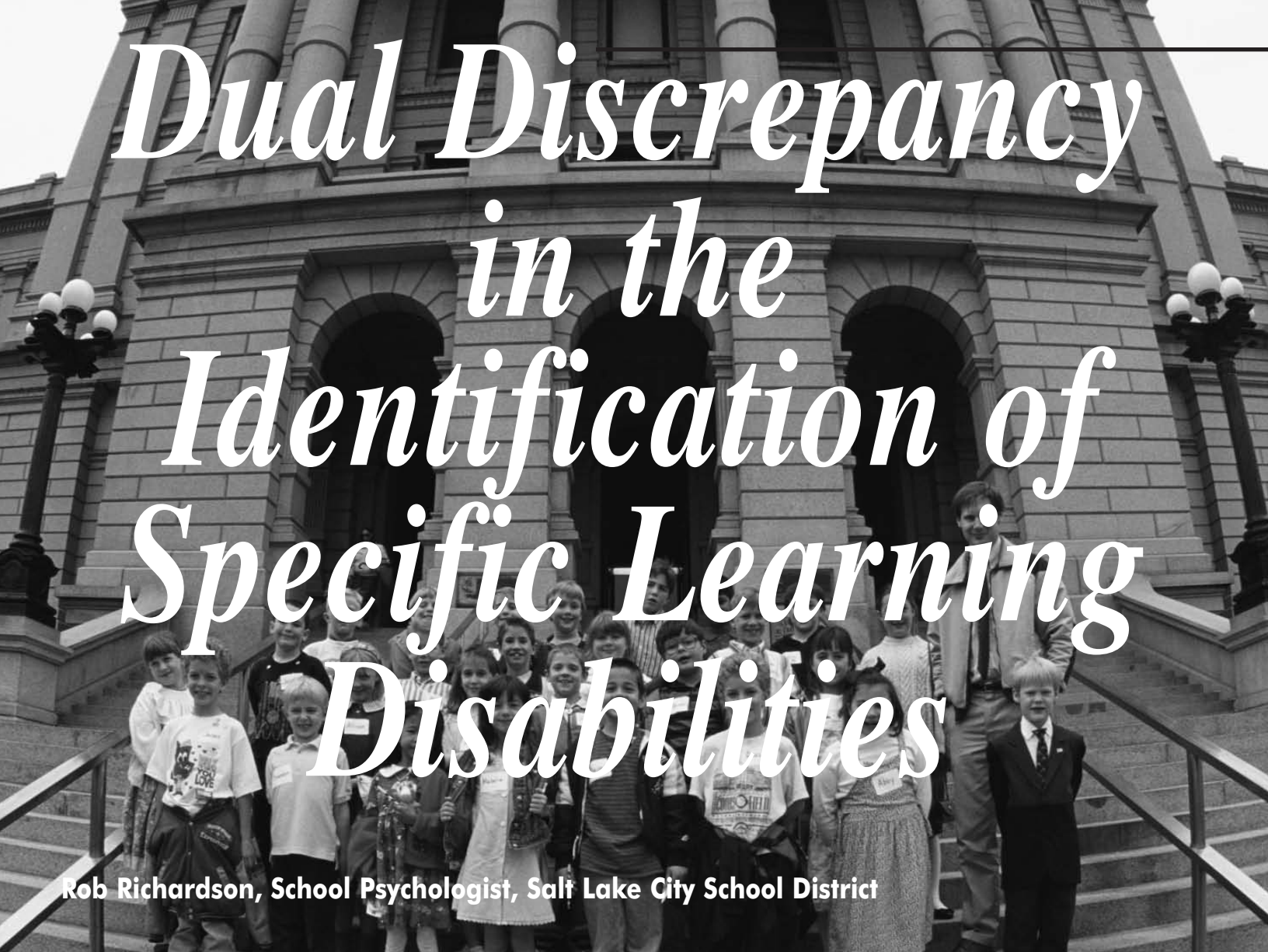
Additionally, this fall, *Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction* will be distributed in its entirety as it has recently been approved by the Utah State Board of Education. This model provides a framework for classroom instruction, interventions, and application across all content areas creating successful reading achievement for all students K-12. *Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction* is a process for delivering quality, research-based instruction for ALL, SOME, and FEW. This model serves as a foundation for reducing the prevalence of struggling readers by creating a seamless K-12 instructional system aligning with federal and state legislative requirements. The creation of this model was a joint effort between the Utah State Office of Education's Special Education, General Education, Title I, and Alternative Language Services departments, the Utah Personnel Development Center, and many local districts.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, the urgency for supporting struggling students has not dissipated. In fact, as data

has become part of our educational culture, examining students at each tier has helped us all to refine our practices and look at the bigger picture of the district, the school, the grade, the class, and the individual. A trend we are seeing locally and nationally is that many of our students who struggle with reading also exhibit behavior deficits. Recent analysis of disciplinary data and academic proficiency rates demonstrates that social behavior and academic skill are correlates (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland & Good 2006; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, & Catalano, 2004). This is why RTI cannot be just about reading. In order to meet the current and future needs of students, educational professionals must improve and adjust their practices to include behavior and academic supports in a schoolwide systematic fashion such as RTI. This movement is commonly referred to as "looking at both sides of the triangle." And that is just what the future holds for Utah schools. The UPDC is introducing a new initiative this school year that will focus on the systematic implementation of schoolwide academic and behavior supports in a tiered model with the use of coaching to support teachers and ensure fidelity of implementation. We are dedicated to matching instruction to need for improved student outcomes. For more information about this initiative please contact Amber Roderick-Landward; amberl@updc.org or Hollie Pettersson; holliep@updc.org. ■





Dual Discrepancy in the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities

Rob Richardson, School Psychologist, Salt Lake City School District

DIBELS Digest

Likely, you are intimately familiar with the discrepancy model (a.k.a. discrepancy disk or Estimator) for determining whether a student has a specific learning disability. While it does offer a method of defining “unexpected underachievement,” a key definitional component of learning disabilities, the discrepancy model has some major drawbacks including: identifying students only after protracted academic failure, not finding all the students with learning disabilities, not finding only students with learning disabilities, and not directly informing instructional decisions.

A different concept, frequently associated with Response to Intervention (RTI) also uses the term “discrepancy.” You should have this one in your active vocabulary: “dual discrepancy.” A dual discrepancy is present when there is a significant difference between a student’s current level of performance and expected level of performance (the first discrepancy) and a significant difference between that student’s learning rate and the expected learning rate (the second discrepancy). In other words, a student is dually discrepant if they are far behind and falling further behind.

To discover the first discrepancy, you should use a combination of information such as classroom performance, achievement tests (such as WJ-III & CRTs), and curriculum-based measures (such as Oral Reading Fluency). Look for a convergence of data.

The best way to find out whether or not a student has the second discrepancy is to progress monitor using an assessment tool designed for that purpose (e.g. Oral Reading Fluency, Mazes, Nonsense Word Fluency, CBM-Math, CBM-Writing, CBM-Spelling).

When a student is getting quality classroom instruction in addition to quality Tier 2 intervention and still has a dual discrepancy, then you have strong evidence of educational need and compelling reasons for special education eligibility considerations.

How well does oral reading fluency predict CRT Scores?

Very well! Numerous studies across the country have found that oral reading fluency measures and state literacy outcome measures (such as Utah’s CRTs) are highly correlated, indicating that oral reading fluency (ORF) is a good predictor of how a student will perform on an end of the year high-stakes test. The same is true of the relation between ORF and CRTs within our district.

A correlation coefficient is a measure of how strongly two sets of numbers are related, and ranges from -1 to 1, with 0 being no relationship between two scores, 1 being a perfect positive relationship (like an individual's height in feet and height in inches) and -1 being a perfect negative relationship (like distance of a person's nose from the ceiling and from the floor).

The correlation of a SLCS student percentile score on the 2005 language arts CRT with 2006 language arts CRT is around .80. Pretty strong. The correlation of a fall ORF benchmark score to a spring ORF benchmark score for the same student is around .90 across grade levels. In fifth grade the correlation between fall ORF and the spring CRT is about .76. By the end of the year (spring ORF & Spring CRT), the correlation is about .78. Similarly strong correlations are found across elementary school grades.

By way of comparison, the correlation between a really good IQ test and academic achievement is around .70. So, if you want to predict how well your student will do on the Spring CRT, you can do it far more quickly and accurately with 5 minutes of benchmarking than with a two hour battery of cognitive testing! You'll also end up with a better idea of what and how to teach to get that student up to proficiency! (SLCS Special Education: "setting goals; measuring progress; and getting results.")

Getting Student Benchmarks

In Salt Lake City School District (and other districts in Utah), all elementary special education teachers have direct access to student benchmark scores, through the DIBELS website- <http://dibels.uoregon.edu>. After logging in, follow these instructions on retrieving your student data follow.

To see how your students have progressed over the year:

1. Click "view/create reports"
2. Click "Class Progress Graph"
3. Choose grade you are interested in & click "Submit"
4. Choose your name and click "Submit" (All resource teachers should be listed and have secondary classrooms)
5. Click "Download report here"

To find out how many of YOUR students changed risk categories and what their benchmark scores are:

1. Click "view/create reports"
2. Click on "Summary of Effectiveness by Class"
3. Click "Submit"
4. Choose period you are interested in (beginning to middle or middle to end of year)
5. Click "Submit"
6. Choose your name
7. Click "Submit"
8. Click "Download report here"

To find out how many students at your school moved between risk categories (at-risk, some risk & low risk):

1. Click "view/create reports"
2. Click "Summary of Effectiveness by School or District"
3. Click "Submit"
4. Choose period you are interested in (beginning to middle or middle to end of year)
5. Click "Download report here"

From year to year, across grade levels, benchmarking scores have been increasing district wide.

Progress Monitoring vs Benchmarking:

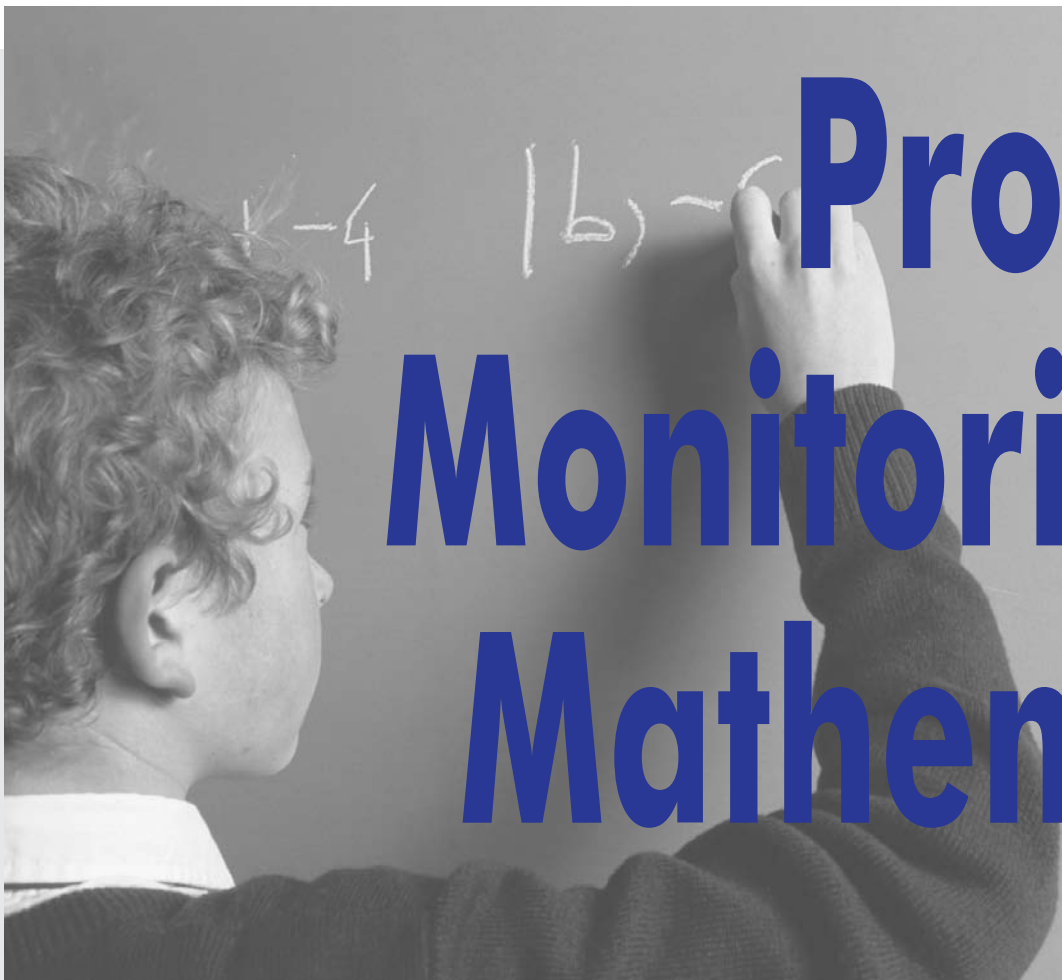
Lots of exciting results on progress monitoring over the course of the year. One example of many: half of Maria Furman-Thomas' resource students made gains of 4 words read correctly per minute (WRC) or better per week on oral reading fluency (ORF). In fact, three of the twenty-three she monitored averaged gains of over 8 WRC growth per week.

Unfortunately, these gains don't always show up on grade level benchmarks. If not, take heart and keep in mind that the progress you see on your progress monitoring charts is real. Sometimes grade-level benchmarks are too far off the student's instructional level to pick up progress. Other times the student might be nervous or just have a bad day. For example, the student illustrated in the following graph averaged around 3.5 WRC increase per week. However, on benchmark data, he began and ended a red (at-risk) student with an average 1/2 WRC per week increase from fall to spring. Don't be discouraged: REMEMBER benchmarks are designed to be screeners not progress monitoring tools. With more data points comes more confidence that the rate of progress you are seeing is real and not due to extraneous factors (e.g. passage difficulty, poor sleep, bad day, nerves...).

From year to year, across grade levels, benchmarking scores have been increasing district-wide. On average scores of lower performing students (at the 5th and 20th percentile), middle performing students (at the 50th percentile) and the top performing students (at the 80th and 95th percentiles) have been showing gains not only within years but from one year to the next. For example, second-graders this year did better across ability levels, than did second-graders last year. One would suspect that these increases are a combined result of using data effectively to change instruction, professional development in literacy instruction combined with heroic efforts on the part of teachers. Keep up the good work.

Students in special education showed impressive progress over the course of this current school year (2006-07). Chasing ever increasing DIBELS benchmark scores across the year is hard work, particularly for students with disabilities. We began and ended the year with about 60% of special education students in at-risk, 15% in some risk and 25% in low-risk categories. The biggest reductions in risk status were in first and fourth grades. 45 first-graders and 36 fourth-graders improved their benchmark status from fall to spring. Unfortunately the vast majority maintained their risk status over the course of the year and some also downgraded their risk status. This happened most dramatically in sixth-grade, where two students went up and 41 went down (the rest staying in the same category). Sixth-graders, in both special and general education, this year and in previous years, have shown a dip in this final set of benchmark passages. Part of the slippage in 6th grade might result from text that involves some unfamiliar vocabulary. Perhaps excitement over 6th grade graduation also contributes.

Overall, congratulations on a year well done! ■



Progress Monitoring in Mathematics

**Julie Mootz, Program Specialist,
Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)**

In recent years, as general educators and policymakers have emphasized greater accountability for schools' efforts to teach all children, many researchers and practitioners have asserted the utility of progress monitoring—particularly in reading—for increasing the numbers of students, regardless of disability status (Deno, 2003). The use of progress monitoring to track student achievement is also one of the essential components to implementing a Response to Intervention (RTI) system. Continuous progress monitoring, in particular, the use of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), is a proven way to demonstrate student achievement (Deno, 1985, Fuchs, 2004). CBM is a set of standardized procedures used to assess student performance on long-term goals and is designed to be an objective ongoing measurement system of student outcomes, which facilitates instructional planning (Deno 1985).

Given this background, attention in progress monitoring has shifted to the area of mathematics. Students benefit from continuous progress monitoring in the content area of mathematics. There have been many questions concerning the implementation of this. Reading has a specific and fairly static General Outcome Measure (GOM), while there has been

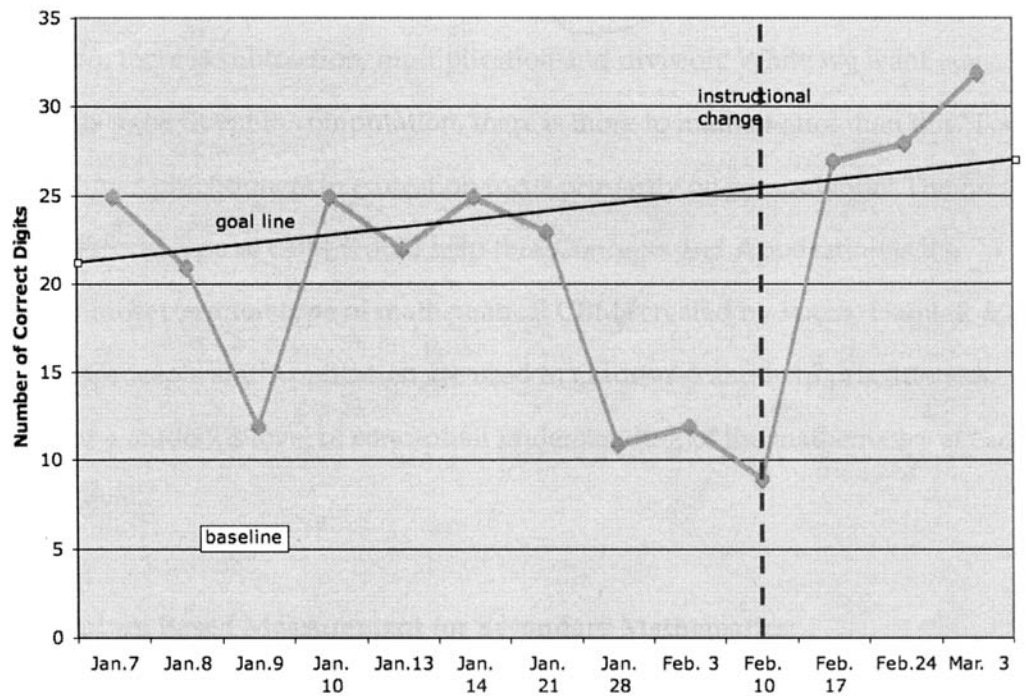
a relatively low degree of consensus on the best approach to use for developing mathematics CBMs (Foegen, Jiban & Deno 2007).

Curriculum Based Measurement for Elementary Mathematics:

One common approach found in the research literature for monitoring progress at the elementary level is to address both the computation and concept development of students. Fuchs, Hamlett & Fuchs at Vanderbilt University, developed one of the most common CBMs for computation. The computation measure consists of a number of parallel forms for grades 1-6. The parallel forms allow practitioners to give repeated testing across time to gauge a student's progress based on an end goal. The computation sheet or probe would contain all the computation skills learned at the end of one grade level. Each state can create CBM computation probes based on their state's math Core.

In math, computation is not the only General Outcome Measure (GOM). Once a student is fluent with addition, there are subtraction, multiplication and division. While we want our students to be fluent in computation, there is more to mathematics than this. Too many times practitioners in education focus primarily on computation. The use of the

Sample CBM computation graph



second type of CBM would help this. Concepts and Application is the second most common type of mathematical CBM created by Fuchs, Hamlett & Fuchs. Concepts and Application is used in grades 2-6 and helps practitioners monitor a student's level of conceptual understanding of the mathematics at each grade level.

Curriculum Based Measurement for Secondary Mathematics:

The status of research in secondary mathematics progress monitoring is in its early stages. Considerable research is needed to formulate and validate mathematical measures (Foegen, Jiban & Deno).

CBM in an RTI System:

Since many of the nationally available math CBMs have been normed, they are especially useful in an RTI setting. Math CBMs can be utilized, like DIBELS or an oral reading fluency (ORF) measure, to benchmark all students three times a year. Those students who fall below benchmark can be monitored more frequently to assess progress. Many school districts currently use periodic assessments to monitor progress. With multiple and parallel forms of the same probe, a student's progress can be tracked across time, so CBM would only enhance the assessments currently in use in schools. CBM can be group administered, requires a short amount of time to administer, and practitioners get quick results to make instructional decisions.

The summer 2007 edition of the *Journal of Special Education* is devoted to CBM. In this journal you will find numerous studies that testify to the validity and reliability of

mathematical CBMs for computation and concepts. Progress monitoring is an important part of the RTI system and CBM can be utilized in mathematics as a way to measure student progress and make instructional decisions at the school level.

For more information concerning CBMs for mathematics, contact Julie Moootz at juliemoo@updc.org. To download free CBM probes for computation, go to www.updc.org and click on Math Corner. To purchase *Monitoring Basic Skills Program*, the computation and concepts CBMs created by Fuchs, Hamlett and Fuchs, go to www.proed.inc.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center ■



RTI and Social Behavior



**Hollie Pettersson, Program Specialist,
Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)**

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act and recent revision of IDEA encourages schools to turn towards proactive and preventative approaches that match the service a student receives with his/her level of need; the vocabulary used to describe this proactive process is Response To Intervention (RTI). In 2005, Batsche and colleagues defined RTI as “the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions.” Following this logic, RTI includes 3 key components: 1) instruction for all students which is scientifically validated 2) reliable and valid data collection which demonstrates learning rate and level of performance for all students, and 3) analysis of data to make important educational intervention decisions.

Focused primarily on addressing academic problems, RTI has emerged as a new way to think about both disability identification and early intervention assistance for the “most vulnerable, academically unresponsive children” in schools and school districts (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007, p. 131). Simultaneous with the development of RTI, School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has emerged as best practice for preventing, intervening and managing behavioral errors in the educational setting.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is based on a problem-solving model and aims to prevent inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing while systematically correcting behavior errors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2007). PBIS is consistent with the core principles of RTI. PBIS offers a range of instructional interventions systematically delivered to students based on analysis of their demonstrated level of need, and addresses the role of the environment as it applies to development and maintenance of behavioral skills, again, consistent with RTI.

This article will frame RTI as an approach for analyzing and intervening with behavior problems in school settings that include Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). In 2004, Sprague indicated “Many evidenced-based interventions for behavior are available; they include methods based on applied behavior analysis (e.g., reinforcement), social learning (teaching expected behaviors through modeling and role playing), and cognitive behavioral methods to teach ‘thinking skills’ such as problem solving, impulse control, and anger management. The RTI focus on regular objective assessment helps us to decide whether to maintain, modify, intensify, or withdraw an intervention.”

Both RTI and PBIS are grounded in differentiated instruction. Both require critical factors and components to be in place at the universal (Tier 1), targeted group (Tier 2), and individual (Tier 3) levels. An RTI approach encompasses PBIS systematically addressing 3 levels of prevention and intervention.

- Tier 1 (ALL): Schools and classrooms provide universal supports for **all** students and in **all** settings. This includes: established expectations, explicitly taught expectations, reinforcement and acknowledgment for following expectations, and systematic correction and re-teaching of behavioral errors.
 - Examples of Practices:
 - Consensus and participation of all staff in establishing and defining expectations (*publicly posted rules*)
 - Teaching expectations using explicit methods with modeling and practice in specific settings (*beginning of year, mid-year, and after extended breaks*)
 - Reinforcing exhibition of established expectations (*Principal's 200 Club*)
 - Systematically correcting behavioral errors (*Computerized analysis and disaggregation of Office Disciplinary Referral and other disciplinary data*)
- Tier 2 (SOME): Schools and classrooms implement high quality supplemental targeted intervention for **some** students, in need of behavioral support in addition to a School-Wide PBIS. Targeted behavioral interventions for **some** include matching of students with intervention based on need (i.e. function of behavioral error) in an efficient system of delivery.
 - Examples of Practices:
 - Behavior Education Program (BEP)
 - Social skills instruction
 - Student mentoring (peer and adult)
 - Academic tutoring
 - Structured recess
 - Newcomers clubs
- Tier 3 (FEW): Schools and multidisciplinary teams provide intensive individual interventions for **few** students, who have not responded to School-Wide PBIS and targeted intervention. This third level of intervention, commonly called wrap-around services, often requires collaboration with family, community agencies, and juvenile justice officials.
 - Examples of Practices:
 - Function based intervention (individually delivered and developed)
 - Mental health wrap-around services
 - Highly intrusive behavior interventions



In summary, historically schools have used reactive and inefficient practices to address academic and behavioral needs. RTI and PBIS are complimentary practices that can help schools develop durable systems of instruction and intervention. This practice will support all students including those who struggle with academic or behavioral skill acquisition and demonstration.

Utah has always been a national leader in the area of behavior. In 2002, Utah's Behavioral Initiative (UBI) was established to provide training and technical assistance to public schools and districts in the state as they implemented PBIS. UBI is a collaborative effort; the Utah Personnel Development Center, the Utah State Office of Education, and the Utah State Personnel Development Improvement Grant all provide funding and personnel resources for the UBI training platform. UBI also has a state advisory council that includes members from the mental health community, institutes of higher education, state office of education leadership, and community partners. Since 2002, over 90 schools have participated in the training platform with 80% implementing PBIS to a high degree. Fidelity of implementation greatly increased with the induction of district PBIS/UBI coaches in 2005. UBI currently has 13 school districts partnering for optimal implementation of PBIS and 72 schools participating on the training platform for the 2007-2008 school year.

These efforts fit into RTI and help build capacity for the state of Utah. For information on RTI for behavior in Utah, please visit the Utah's Behavioral Initiative (UBI) website at www.updc.org/ubi or contact Hollie Pettersson at holliep@updc.org. ■

Response to

Granite School District Searches for the Answers

Heather Creel, School Psychologist, and Kathryn McCarrie, Special Education Director

This summer, the world awaited the release of JK Rowling's final book in the Harry Potter series. The book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, received unprecedented anticipation and the media coverage was intensive for days prior to its release. The post office geared up for home deliveries to be made precisely on Saturday, July 21, and book stores began selling it promptly at 12:00 A.M. The book was touted as giving the answers, concluding the search, and resolving the battle between good and evil. Any phenomena receiving this much attention has an educational parallel—and it is RTI (Response to Intervention).

In Granite School District, we could not wait to read more about RTI. Yes, we were hoping to find the magic sorting hat that would accurately identify and place kids into the appropriate disability category. Instead, we found only clues to the essence for which we searched; and just like Harry Potter, we found obstacles and challenges along the way. *The Deathly Hallows* begins with Harry preparing for his journey into the unknown, not really understanding where to begin or precisely knowing for what he is searching. Consequently, he just begins. In many respects, we did the same.

Any journey requires alliances. Harry had Hermione and Ron to help him gather information and to strategize. We needed our general education friends. Our first step was to get curriculum people on board with a solid understanding of the Three Tier Model. They were also essential to help us define what quality instruction and interventions look like at Tier I and Tier II and to be part of a district mandate for progress monitoring in reading and math.

The next step was to operationally define the process with specific guidelines that would answer the basic questions: How much progress is good enough? How long do interventions need to be in place? How do we know which interventions to use? How are the interventions documented? Since the magical school of Hogwarts is not in Granite School District, we chose 10 elementary schools to pilot interventions and procedures. (More about these will be shared in the upcoming November issue of *The Utah Special Educator*).

"We may not have magic, but we have dedicated professionals who will continue the search for something more."



Intervention

Harry Potter had a wand and was backed by other wizards. We had school psychologists that came with testing kits, but not with wands, and certainly not with expertise in RTI. Consequently, we turned to a local expert in the field, Laura Tuesday-Heathfield, from the University of Utah, Department of Educational Psychology. She set up a four-session course that covered current research, assessment descriptors, and data analysis. The participants read articles pertaining to language arts including early literacy, reading decoding, reading comprehension, written language, and intervention with English Language Learners. The psychologists then studied interventions for students with learning difficulties by reviewing research articles, attending lectures, and participating in discussions.

As part of the course, each participant conducted a six week case study on a student with language arts deficits who was not currently served under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Each school psychologist began by collecting information regarding a student's current level of performance. The assessments used included teacher, parent, and student interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum-based assessment data from *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*, *Yearly Progress Pro (YPP)* Reading Maze, *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, *Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)*, *Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)*, and/or the *Fry Word Inventory*.

After the initial assessment, an intervention was developed to target the student's specific literacy difficulty. Examples of these interventions included the following:

- Paired reading activity
- Study of troublesome word patterns
- Beginning sound flip chart
- Home note reading program
- Modeled reading
- Sight word vocabulary flash cards
- Re-reading with corrective feedback
- Word study
- Repeated reading for fluency on pre-read of basal text
- Vocabulary search
- Word drills
- Simultaneous reading
- Listening Passage Preview (www.interventioncentral.org)
- A middle vowel game called the "Short Vowel Hop"

Throughout the intervention period, progress monitoring was conducted a minimum of twice weekly. Graphs were created and the slopes of progress were compared with goal lines. The results were written up in the form of a report, and oral presentations were shared with fellow psychologists and other district professionals.

Following this new learning, the school psychologists reflected on their experiences. Common insights included the following:

- **Recognition that effective student interventions require adequate time and resources.** Specific student intervention and monitoring is time consuming and labor intensive. Many schools lack the funding and personnel deemed necessary to develop significant and targeted intervention programs. In the majority of the case studies, an intervention two days per week for six weeks was insufficient to produce substantial academic growth. Most participants felt a more intense intervention for a longer period of time by a trained interventionist (as many of the psychologists felt themselves under-trained for that role) may have the potential to produce more dramatic student results. Participants recognized that "student progress is not an 'overnight phenomenon'," and one remarked, "Be patient. I...want[ed] quick results. Improvement can be slow."
- **Understanding of the limitations of standard assessment tools.** Often a standard assessment is too general to adequately pinpoint specific areas of need in student achievement. When a rich base of information has been gathered, more concentrated interventions for specific gaps in learning is possible. One participant stated that, "There is much to learn simply by listening to a child read and analyzing how she reads."
- **Increased appreciation for team collaboration.** A wealth of information was gained from students, parents, classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, speech/language pathologists, paraprofessionals, and others who worked with the student. They shared their expertise and experience in gathering assessment information, designing an intervention, and evaluating student progress for the targeted student's need. "I gained a vibrant respect for our reading specialist and reading aides," said one participant. Another psychologist remarked, "The reading specialist was excited to have someone willing to help a struggling reader and engaged in meaningful dialogue concerning assessment and intervention strategies for that student."

The experience as a whole provided a valuable opportunity for school psychologists in Granite School District to immerse themselves in the Response to Intervention process of gathering assessment information, designing and implementing an intervention, monitoring progress, and evaluating student growth. The Harry Potter series may have ended, but we will be continuing to train others and to gather additional information. We may not have magic, but we have dedicated professionals who will continue the search for something more. Look for more information regarding Granite District's pursuit of RTI in our preschool and elementary schools in the next issue of *The Utah Special Educator*, available November 9. ■

Back to Fundamentals



Situation

The 2007-2008 school year is a very important year for our public schools. The No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) will be reauthorized, revised or retired. This is the year that, predictably, twenty-five to thirty percent of our public schools will be designated as “failures.” And, the rest of our public schools will be scrambling and grubbing to make the required adequate yearly progress (AYP’s) as judged by a once-a-year, high stakes, test of objective facts.

Five years ago when NCLB was new, Gerald Bracey published a very well researched and documented book, *On the Death of Childhood and the Destruction of Public Schools*. Bracey predicted everything that has happened in the wake of the NCLB law. This year Sharon Nichols and David Berliner (David was a classmate of mine and one of the best educational researchers in the country) have published a book of their four years of in-depth research on the effects of NCLB, *Collateral Damage*. Everyone interested in public education should read this book. We all need to know the well researched details for the legal and political power that confronts each of us every day in our classrooms and schools.

My purpose in this paper is to explore some options on how to cope with the power and politics of NCLB. In my state, Vermont, the educators pretty much ignore NCLB. They use their standard state formative testing procedures and have not altered their school curriculum.

Vermont has about 270 school districts for a little over half a million population. Some districts do not have a student, but they stand ready in

case a student arrives. The state’s average class size is 15 to 18 students from kindergarten through year 12. Diversity is very light. Poverty is prevalent but it is not the same as urban poverty. Vermonters pay \$12,000 per student per year for public education. Vermont has very near top test scores. We also have a number of private schools, but they are over one hundred years old and they cost about \$30,000 and up per year. I heard a story last fall that our State Director of Education told the annual opening conference of local superintendents, “When the State of Vermont’s test scores are lower than Rhode Island’s we will talk about them.”

This “flash card” of Vermont is not to call attention to demographics, tax laws or politics. It is to remind us that every state is different. The common responsibility for every state is to educate all of the children of all of the people to the best of each child’s ability. Although it will be hard to imagine in Utah, I find the contrast interesting.

Fundamentals

I had fun when I played football, and I learned that everyone on the team had to work together to succeed. When the going got tough, all of my coaches used to say “let’s get back to fundamentals.”

What fundamentals do we need to encourage our students’ success in school and life? Nel Nodding, in her forward to *Collateral Damage* (that I hope all of you will read) had the following list of attributes for success in schooling:

Perseverance - A person that will stay up late to finish an assignment on time. One who will rewrite a paper when they feel it can be improved.

A person who will not quit when the task is difficult.

Intellectual Curiosity - This is a person who regularly asks good, thoughtful questions. A fully engaged person that asks questions for clarity—to better understand. One who can perceive relationships between the ideas presented and other life experiences.

Commitment to Worthy Goals - A person who is determined to continue his or her education and is willing to work hard to achieve that end. One who will always do his or her best at whatever they do.

Open to Criticism - A person who will not defend or react when criticized, but will ask questions and respond with the expectation of an opportunity to learn.

Supportive Parents - Parents, other family and friends who want to encourage the young should read to them, turn off or control TV, praise schoolwork and support teachers.

A fundamental idea (from my own play book) - All school curriculum, in so far as possible, should enhance curiosity, imagination and encourage caring for others.

Many of you can remember when educators talked about these and many other fundamental ideas. It was fun. It reminded us of our moral ground for being a teacher. I always felt better after a good discussion about ideas I cared about. This kind of intellectual exercise is important to help keep the essence of our work clear—to help direct our day-to-day classroom work.

My old coaches, however, when they referred to fundamentals, were not thinking ideas. They were talking about concrete action—blocking and tackling—performed on the field.

For educators, our field is the classroom with thirty students and the door closed, where we tackle a continuous set of student responses and we block diversion and neglect from the intent of instruction.

The fundamental ideals of schooling and the details of curriculum are important; I submit that the game in the classroom is won or lost on our ability to accurately perceive the intimate details of how students respond to instruction and how we respond to those perceived details. Here lies the real art of teaching, for art is always distinguished through nuances and intimate details.

Options

The Vermont solution is not feasible in Utah. Our task is to determine how we can cope with the current reality in Utah schools.

Roland Barth, the founding director of the Harvard Principal's Center and the author of *Improving Schools from Within*, made very clear that a precondition for doing anything to improve our practice and to improve a school is the existence of a collegial culture. This means strong and productive relationships between teachers, where professionals talk about the details and nuances of their practice, share their experiential wisdom and observe and root for the success of one another. Without these variables in place, no sustainable improvement is possible.

This basic model assumes (1) that school improvement is whole—it includes everyone, (2) that improvement is integrated with our school's curriculum and goals, and (3) that school improvement must aim for long term sustainability.

For a whole, integrated and sustainable process to improve your school's culture and productivity to succeed, pay close attention to the details of the following three essentials:

1. **Data** - Nichols and Berliner in *Collateral Damage*, state that "Teachers' judgment (opinion) actually appears to be as good as high stakes testing in predicting future achievement in early grades K-6 (with far less damage). So there probably is no justification at all for testing young children under NCLB." Elliot Eisner, an imminent curriculum specialist from Stanford University suggests, no, implores, "That rather than looking at test scores we should be looking at the degree of engagement students display." So, we should be collecting teacher opinions of the level of engagement of all of our students. Try it and you will be amazed.
2. **Dialogue** - Teacher teams need to talk to each other about the intimate details of how individual students are responding to instruction. The teachers' opinions of their students' level of engagement should be used to focus the team's discussions. Fully engaged students should be asked to do school work they did not know they could do. When student work exceeds expectations it creates a model that encourages other students. As students choose to do their school work, they tend to do that work the way they have seen it done best. Good modeling is good curriculum. Students that hide or become invisible, who do as little school work as possible, need to be watched closely to do some satisfactory school work every day. When a

non-working student starts to work, it pushes everyone. Students who resist or misbehave need to be loved and not allowed to interfere with working students. This is a very compressed description of a fundamental idea called the "group effect." Teachers who have been exposed to this idea and coached in its use adapt this process as their standard mode of operation.

3. **Praxis** - This is an ancient Greek word that means thought to action, or the action taken, or to do something about what you have talked about. The best responses that occur in dialogue should be put into practice in your classroom. Ideas must be performed to produce results.

Help

Now, here is where coaching comes into the process. Coaching is the active form of teaching that emphasizes performance on the field, court, stage, orchestra, blank canvas or a classroom with thirty students and the door closed. If you would like to move toward a whole, integrated and sustainable solution for school improvement, you will need coaching in the details of applying the essential functions of collecting teacher opinion, team dialogue and praxis (putting thought into action). To insure success ask someone who uses the process.

There are a number of very competent and experienced practitioners in the Jordan School District. To access this source of experiential wisdom you could contact Mark Riding of the UPDC staff who was a Jordan District principal and the original chairman of the Jordan District Praxis Project. Or, you could go directly to the present project chair, Karen Thomson, the principal of the Willow Canyon Elementary School.

If you would prefer a more gradual approach to the powerful leverage of General Systems Theory (this is an academic title for the process of integrating data, dialogue and action), here is a suggestion:

In a faculty meeting, prepare the faculty for this idea. The principal and a team of teachers (grade level team with their classes covered) would walk through the school and visit every classroom for three minutes. When Noel Grable the principal of Jordan Ridge Elementary School that I visit regularly suggested this idea, I thought it was "dumb." I was wrong. The walk-through was really fun. The payoff was in the dialogue that followed. Teachers could not wait to share the ideas they observed. As an example, the detailed differences in the observations of how the "word board" was used amazed me. All of the teachers left the discussion all a-buzz about their experiences in their own school. Try it, you will like it.

Summary

I am reminded of the best advice I have ever received. My mother graduated from high school and completed one year of normal school (Teachers College). She accepted a job as the teacher in a one-room school in rural Montana. Margaret was nineteen years old. Her school enrolled thirty-plus students in grades 1 through 8. The teacher and students were responsible for keeping the school clean and warm. This required a daily sweep, dusting and bringing in the wood. There was an indoor pump for water and an outdoor toilet. She had a set of readers, a map of Montana and the United States, a globe of the world, a small library and a big chalk board. All of the students learned to read, write, spell, do arithmetic and get along with each other. The real test was that all of Margaret's graduates went on to high school.

When I was in graduate school, I asked my mother "How did you handle this rural school for five years?" "Donnie," she said, "we just had to learn to help each other." ■

Instructional Coaching: An Educational Revolution, Another Passing Fad, or Systematically Implemented Common Sense?



Schools, principals, and teachers everywhere in this country are under significant pressure to produce results for all students. These pressures are leading schools on a concerted search for evidence-based practices that improve instructional quality. Seemingly, there is no shortage of practices that pledge to increase student achievement and improve the overall functioning of our schools. Browse through a copy of an education journal, stroll down the aisles at a teacher's convention like UEA, or consider the unsolicited catalogs and other mailings you receive from curriculum clearinghouses and publishers touting the virtues of one product or another. We are in an era of innovation overload (Abrahamson, 2004)!

Deciding which educational innovation to invest in and which to avoid may require more skill and dexterity (and luck) than picking winners and avoiding losers in the stock market. These decisions require a keen awareness of the empirical evidence supporting the innovation, reports describing training and implementation requirements, and an analysis of the overall pros and cons of adopting or adapting the innovation. The ultimate decision rests on three factors: (1) the likelihood that the innovation will make a whopping positive difference in student achievement by supporting teachers in their work, (2) the likelihood that the innovation can be sustained over time —i.e., that it will “stick”, and (3) cost factors.

This article, as well the coaching article to follow, will spotlight an innovation that can be a difference-maker in Utah schools: instructional coaching. This article will explain what an instructional coach is, what an instructional coach does, and what skills an instructional coach needs. The reasons underlying the current

Dr. Dan Morgan, Utah State Personnel Development Grant

emphasis on instructional coaching will be discussed as well. The article will conclude with a brief overview of The Utah Coaching Model and a brief description of other approaches to coaching that have informed and shaped what we now refer to as the Utah Coaching Model.

What Is a Coach?

Coaches have been in schools forever it seems. The P.E. teacher was a coach. Your algebra teacher was a coach. The history teacher...a coach. And, yes, the special education teacher was a coach.

Coaches receive a great deal of attention. They are celebrated when they are successful; ridiculed and criticized when they are unsuccessful. Most coaches argue that they receive too much credit when they win and too much blame when they lose.

Coaches are everywhere today, not just the professional or amateur athletic arena. Type “coaching” in the Google search engine and you may be surprised at the results. The vast majority of the links are to business sites. Coaching is big business for businesses big and small. There are also a large number of links to “life coaches” (think Tony Robbins, Steven Covey, and so on). Take a minute to pause now and follow the bold print instructions below;

1. Think about a coach in your life who really made a difference. It could be a parent, uncle, teacher, religious leader, friend, piano teacher, or a coach-coach. What did this person do that was so special or so helpful that you think of him or her now?

2. Think about a “famous” coach in your world. It could be local sports notables like LaVell Edwards, Jerry Sloan, or Bronco Mendenhall. It could be national sports figures such as Phil Jackson, Urban Meyer, Joe Torre, or Joe Paterno. Or, you might be thinking of coaches in other areas of performance—dance, music, politics, medicine. What are the personal characteristics that your famous coach possesses that may have implications for instructional coaches in schools?

A coach is commonly defined as somebody who instructs an individual in a specified subject. An instructional coach has been defined by a number of individuals and organizations. Here is a sampling:

- The term coaching includes activities related to developing the organizational capacity of whole schools...It includes helping principals and teachers reallocate their resources and improve their use of data in the service of improving instruction. And it includes activities directly related to improving instruction

(such as one-on-one observation and feedback of teachers’ instructional strategies and small-group learning of new content and pedagogy). (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 4).

- To coach is to meet colleagues where they are and explicitly support them in achieving the goals they set for themselves. (Dunne & Villiani, 2007, p. 61)
- Cognitive Coaching is a supervisory/peer coaching model that capitalizes upon and enhances cognitive processes. It is a set of strategies, a way of thinking and a way of working that invites self and others to shape and reshape their thinking and problem solving capacities. Cognitive coaching enables people to modify their capacity to modify themselves. (Costa & Garmston, 1997)

Jim Knight of the University of Kansas offers a more straight forward and plain English definition:

“A good coach is an excellent teacher and is kind-hearted, respectful, patient, compassionate, and honest. A good coach has high expectations and provides the affirmative and honest feedback that helps people to realize those expectations. A good coach can see something special in you that you didn’t know was there and help you make that something special become a living part of you. That is the kind of coach we have in mind when we use the term “instructional coach.” (2007, pp. 15-16).

Now think about the coaches you identified in the previous reflection exercise. How many of the characteristics in Knight’s definition are present in your important and famous coach list? Which ones? Does that help you clarify some of your thoughts about instructional coaching?

Another question often asked about coaching is: What’s the difference between a mentor and coach? Are they one in the same or are they two different people in distinctly different roles? A mentor is somebody, usually older and more experienced, who provides advice and support to, and watches over and helps to foster the progress of a younger, less experienced person. (The first mentor, who was named Mentor, appeared in Homer’s *Odyssey*. He was the friend whom Odysseus left in charge of the household while he was at Troy and who was the teacher and protector of Odysseus’ son.)

Synonyms for “coach” include trainer, teacher, instructor, and tutor. Synonyms for “mentor” include teacher, guide, tutor, advisor.

The attempt to distinguish between a coach and a mentor becomes important when the person coached or mentored is a new teacher. Does a new teacher need a mentor and a coach, or does that new teacher need one individual—a mentor who coaches and a coach who mentors? Fundamentally, both a mentor and a coach are teachers...teachers teaching teachers. Spending too much time trying

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Coaching

to parse the differences, if any, between the two may not be the wisest way to spend our time. Mentors mentor and coach-i.e., they teach. Coaches coach and mentor-i.e., they teach. Teaching is the common thread.

When mentors only mentor and coaches only coach, we lose the promise of the powerful mix of heart, soul, and skill.

Why Coaching?

The recent focus on instructional coaching is a response to the relatively recent federal and state emphasis on accountability and results. It is clear that teachers and administrators will require significant amounts of professional development for schools to achieve the targets set for them by policy-makers and lawmakers. The problem is, however, that there are some problems with professional development for teachers and administrators as it has been practiced for years.

Many of the more conventional forms of professional development—such as conferences, lectures, and mass teacher-institute days—are unpopular with educators because they are often led by outside experts who tell teachers what to do, then are never heard from again. (Russo, 2004, p. 2)

Difference-making professional development must be ongoing, as close to home as possible (i.e., the teacher's classroom), and focused on supporting and guiding teachers in the implementation of evidence-based practices (NSDC, 2001).

When the effectiveness of coaching is discussed, the data represented in Table 1 are often cited. The research represented was initially reported by Joyce and Showers (2002) and discussed at length in Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace (2005).

Table 1
The Effects of Training and Coaching on Teacher's Implementation in the Classroom

Training Components	Knowledge/Awareness Concept Understanding	Skill Demonstration	Use in the Classroom
Theory	85%	15%	5-10%
Model	85%	18%	5-20%
Practice	85%	80%	10-15%
Coaching	90%	90%	80-90%

What these data say is:

1. Training that consisted of only theory and discussion produced only a modest gain in knowledge and the ability to demonstrate the skills in an isolated training setting. There was no transfer to the classroom, however.
2. When demonstrations, practice, and feedback were added to the training in the isolated setting, more substantial gains were realized. However, there was still very little transfer to the classroom.
3. When follow-up coaching was included in the training, large gains were seen in knowledge and the ability to demonstrate the skills in the training environment. Most importantly, the transfer of the newly acquired knowledge and skills was remarkable.



It would be wrong to imply here that the evidence for the effectiveness of coaching is incontrovertible. No large scale studies have been completed that make the unequivocal empirical case for instructional coaching. However, much research and evaluation is currently underway that is producing the kinds of results that ought to draw attention of policy-makers, lawmakers, school administrators, and all educators concerning the promising potential of instructional coaching on our students and teachers.

What Do Coaches Do?

What coaches do depends on how the purposes of coaching are viewed. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (undated) provided one of the more succinct descriptions of the purpose of instructional coaching by offering this twofold purpose:

- Help teachers transfer what they learn about new practices to their classrooms
- Help establish a safe environment in which teachers can strive to improve their practice without fear of negative criticism or evaluation.

These purposes are implemented in the context of a district's or school's guiding framework for quality instruction; e.g., the Utah Professional Teacher Standards, a checklist of effective instructional practices, or content specific standards for teachers and students. Without a standards-based focus and anchor, coaches and teachers will not know where they are going and they won't know when they get there.

Killion and Harrison (2005) provide a concise job description for instructional coaches by identifying 9 coaching roles: (1) catalyst for change, (2) classroom supporter, (3) curriculum specialist, (4) data coach, (5) instructional specialist, (6) learning facilitator, (7) mentor, (8) resource provider, and (9) school leader. It should be noted that these roles are recommended for full-time instructional coaches.

What Skills Do Coaches Need?

To be an effective instructional coach, an educator must have a wide range of highly developed and well-honed interpersonal skills, instructional skills, and instructional mindsets to succeed.

Instructional skills. Must a good coach be a good teacher? The evidence is pretty convincing that an instructional coach without instructional credibility is like a flight instructor who has never soloed. Coaches must be more than familiar with the evidence-based instruction literature. They must be able to model basic effective teaching routines. They must also be able to observe others' teaching and identify areas of strength and areas requiring more development based on a deep understanding of what works and what doesn't work with students.

Interpersonal skills. Does a really good teacher make a good instructional coach? An effective instructional coach needs to be more than an effective teacher. The coach's primary challenge is to work with another individual who, for all intent and purpose, is the coach's peer (regardless of the difference in age or experience between the two) and who may require a great deal of support and direction to improve his or her instructional skills. Meeting this challenge requires a unique combination of relationship building skills. Many coaching experts emphasize the importance of good



listening skills, empathy, respect, clear verbal behavior, and the ability to build emotional connections with teachers as vital to being a successful instructional coach. John Wooden, the legendary great UCLA basketball coach whose teams won 16 national championships, nailed the essence of coaching with the following words: "A coach is someone who can give correction without causing resentment." That is the coach's challenge. It is a high bar indeed.

A coach is someone who can give correction without causing resentment—John Wooden

Mindsets. A mindset is an attitude, a state of mind, that helps guide our behavior. A required mindset for a successful instructional coach is comparable to the mindsets observed in successful individuals in a variety of fields of endeavor. An instructional coach must be passionate and deeply committed to his or her role. An instructional coach is so relentless that failure is not only not an option, it is not even considered. Knight (2006a), citing James Collins, the author of *Good to Great*, tells us that a successful coach will do whatever is required to improve instruction and outcomes for teachers and students by demonstrating a combination of "personal humility and professional will." (p.40)

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Necessary Conditions for Successful Coaching

Knight (2006b) focuses on several factors that increase the likelihood that instructional coaching can play a significant role in school improvement efforts:

1. A coach must have time to work with teachers. Time is a precious and costly resource. To not allocate and protect significant blocks of time for coaches to coach creates such a significant hurdle that makes the prospect of positive outcomes an empty promise.
2. Coaches must be familiar with and have access to a repertoire of research-based instructional and behavioral interventions.
3. There must be opportunities for instructional coaches to grow professionally. Continual upgrading and refinement of both coaching skills and practices, and instructional and behavioral interventions is an absolute ingredient of any successful instructional coaching initiative.
4. Instructional coaches and the teachers they work with are, first and fundamentally, peers. Coaches cannot be put in a quasi-administrative position and be expected to work with teachers as “co-equals.” Additionally, coaches must maintain the highest level of confidentiality with respect to revealing personally identifiable information about anybody they are coaching. Coaches may not gossip or tattle.
5. Principals and coaches must work together, but this does not happen by simply saying it is so. Coaches must keep principals informed about what they do and why they do it the way they do it. Similarly, principals must make a concerted effort to support coaches and to try to understand what the coach does and why it will contribute to better outcomes in his or her school.
6. Schools implementing instructional coaching must be committed to evaluating the impact of their coaching initiative, both procedurally and substantively. More importantly, perhaps, they must be willing to refine and modify the coaching model and practices they use in response to experience and evaluation data.

There are no quick fixes in education. Acknowledging and buying into these necessary conditions for successful instructional coaching is critical. Change—ongoing, sustainable, high impact, and supported—only occurs with maximum effort and public commitment by school leaders.



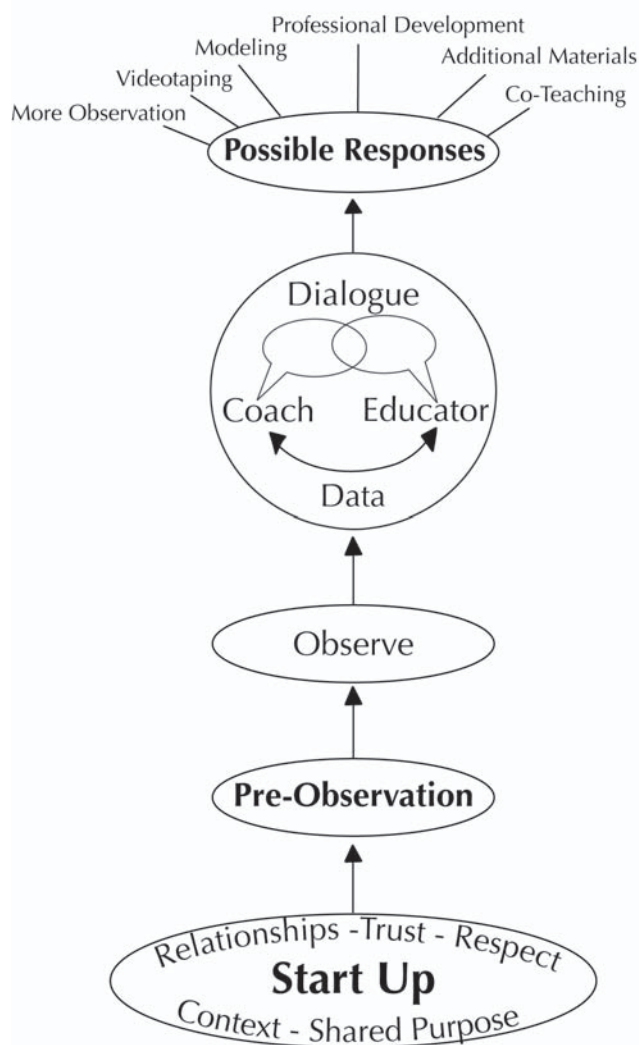


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The Utah Coaching Model

Utah Coaching Model



Over the last several months, staff at the Utah Personnel Development Center and the Utah State Personnel Development Grant have been developing an approach to instructional coaching that is unique to Utah and brands it as such by calling it the Utah Coaching Model. This is not to suggest that there is nothing familiar or derivative in the Utah Coaching Model. On the contrary, we gratefully acknowledge and honor the contributions of those other approaches to instructional coaching that have informed the development of the Utah Coaching Model.

We have learned much from those centers, organizations, and individuals who have done exemplary work and accomplished much over the years in their efforts to support teachers through various models of coaching. The New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz is a national leader in providing mentoring and coaching to new teachers. The principles and practices of Cognitive Coaching and Collaborative Coaching are embedded in various aspects of the Utah Coaching Model. Finally, the work of the Instructional Coaching Institute at the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas has contributed much to the development of our model. (Note reference list on p.45)

The Utah Coaching Model represents a synthesis and blending of the best of each of the models previously identified. It is, on one hand, the culmination of a concerted effort to develop a conceptual and practical coaching model unique to our state. It also marks the beginning of the continuous revision and improvement cycle that inevitably occurs when implementers and collaborators are dedicated to discovering what works best for teachers, for students and for Utah schools. Our Utah Coaching Model includes five major parts: Start Up, Pre-Observation, Observation, Collaborative Data Analysis/Dialogue, and Response.

**Ginny Eggen, Amber Roderick-Landward, Hollie Pettersson,
Mark Riding, Utah Personnel Development Center & Dan Morgan,
Bruce Schroeder, Utah State Personnel Development Grant**



Start Up

An important part of the start up process for coaching is ensuring that the context for coaching has been articulated by the district (much of this is explained in Dan Morgan's article on Instructional Coaching on p. 40). The structure for coaching should be well outlined and defined including the delineation of a shared purpose and goals, specific roles, and developing a system of support (including professional development). There should be a collective understanding that the coach's role is to offer assistance through observation and reflective conversation rather than evaluation. A person should be designated to supervise and facilitate coaching in the district.

Once a structure has been established, coaches are recruited. The importance of choosing the right people to coach and providing adequate training and support for them cannot be overemphasized. Effective coaches must be knowledgeable and experienced educators. They should have knowledge not only about curriculum, but also about standards-based instruction and analyzing data to inform practice. They must also demonstrate effective communication and collaboration skills and be able to work with adults.

At the heart of coaching there must be a commitment to nurturing a positive collaborative relationship based on mutual respect and support. Maintaining trust and confidentiality are critical to the success of any coaching relationship. Jim Knight refers to "partner-

ship principles" that he suggests guide the actions of coaches when they are working with other educators. Establishing such a partnership means operating as a peer who values the experience, knowledge and opinions of other professionals. The goal of coaching is guiding a teacher to more effective practice through reflection. Skills such as providing effective feedback, questioning and paraphrasing are essential for coaches in order to develop reflection in the educators with whom they work.

This Utah Coaching Model requires a flexible approach whereby a coach responds to a teacher's needs. Training should emphasize the approaches that might be used. A **facilitative** approach entails the coach asking open questions that invite the teacher to learn from experience in the classroom. The coach acts as a facilitator of the teacher's thinking and the teacher is encouraged to self-assess and problem solve. In a **collaborative** approach the teacher and coach engage in two-way conversations where they co-construct solutions together. The coach guides interaction, without controlling it. The **instructive** approach is more directive and is used when a teacher requests or appears to require suggestions and solutions. Coaches select the approach they will use after observing and meeting with a teacher. Effective coaches understand that they will move back and forth among the approaches depending upon the cues they are given by the teacher. No matter which method a coach chooses, the coach is always committed to nurturing a positive relationship. *Continued on page 48*

The Utah Coaching Model.....



Pre-Observation

The pre-observation meeting, also known as the pre-conference in some coaching models, is the meeting that takes place between the teacher and the coach before an observation is conducted. The purpose of the pre-observation is to identify the practice or behavior that the teacher would like the coach to observe and provide feedback. The purpose of the observation is determined by the teacher, but may be influenced by standards or checklists in place as part of a program or larger initiative in the school or district. The coach is mindful of the needs of the teacher and may choose to be more directive if it appears to be necessary. The coach's task in a pre-observation is to ask questions that will help the teacher conceptualize an element(s) of the big four—behavior, content, instruction, and formative assessment of the lesson, that will be observed. Ultimately, the coach aids the teacher in clarifying for which specific instructional practice the coach should gather data.

The teacher and the coach may choose to co-construct an observation form that outlines the critical teaching behaviors related to the instructional practice. This experience will provide the coach with an opportunity to check the teacher's understanding and give the teacher ownership of the criteria. Whether or not the coach and the teacher co-construct the observation form, the teacher and coach must decide how to record the evidence or data relating to the focused instructional practice. A flexible observation tool with a simple table to organize observational notes and data can be developed during the discussion. Examples of forms for observation typically include three components a) teaching practice or skill, b) space for an observation tally to keep track of number of times a targeted skill is observed, and c) a comments section for questions and detailed information to be written.

When a coach moves through the components of coaching with a teacher, both the teacher and coach are learning.

At the UPDC, we view the pre-observation as a process that allows the coach to support the teacher in defining the outcomes he/she desires for improved student achievement based on the outcomes identified by the school's improvement plan or initiatives. This process establishes the foundation of coaching because it strengthens the relationship and allows the process of data-based instruction with support to begin.

Observation

Yogi Berra was a successful coach for the New York Yankees and he said it best: "You can observe a lot by watching." During an observation, the coach observes the teacher delivering a lesson. The subject, date, time, and duration of the observation would have been identified during the pre-observation meeting. The purpose of the observation is to gather non-evaluative information, collect data, and develop insights and questions that might be shared during the data and dialogue session to follow. Some instructional elements that the coach may be taking data for during the observation include:

- **Instructional Competency**—How well did the teacher cover the instructional content? Were the key concepts emphasized? Did the students understand what the teacher was teaching? How well did the teacher differentiate instruction? How effective was the instruction? Was the teacher connecting the content to previously learned material? Was it clear what the teacher was attempting to teach?
- **Student Engagement**—Did the students appear to be learning? Were the majority of the students engaged during the lesson and did they attend to the assigned tasks? Did the teacher move around the classroom and monitor behavior or stay attached to the teacher desk? Did the teacher teach with energy and enthusiasm or was the instructional delivery bland? Was the teacher's pacing too fast or too slow?
- **Organization**—Was the teacher organized and prepared? Were the materials ready and was the lesson free of distractions and interruptions? Were transitions smooth or bumpy? Did the students know the classroom procedures for getting materials, taking breaks, etc.
- **Assessment**—Did the teacher record the students' performance following the lesson? Does the teacher know who will need more practice and possible re-teaching? Is data recorded for later use on report cards? Is there evidence of record keeping?
- **Environment**—Is the classroom inviting and nurturing? Is the room organized to facilitate small group, individual, and large group instruction? Is there evidence of good student work displayed on the walls?

During an observation, the coach observes the teacher in action with the intent of sharing information teacher to teacher in a non-evaluative way. The observations are usually recorded on an observation form which highlights a TEACHING PRACTICE

designated in the pre-observation followed by COMMENTS. The observation form serves as the graphic organizer for the Dialogue Phase of coaching which will follow.

Data First

The next step in the instructional coaching process involves reviewing the data that has been collected. A data review should start with the notes the coach has made during a direct observation of teaching. While the information is still fresh, the coach and teacher meet to review and process the data. This meeting would be collaborative between professional peers, rather than authoritative where the coach knows all the answers. The instructional coach provides opinions and observations while remaining open to alternative points of view. It is often helpful for the coach to clearly present the data using an observation form or checklist as a guide to initiate the process. The coach would begin by describing what was observed and then asking the teacher for his or her perceptions and reactions. The focus on data to guide the discussion keeps the interaction professional. Together the coach and teacher can proceed to identify common points of view and what the next steps should be.

Dialogue and Discussion

During a collaborative exploration of data it is not unusual for a coach and a teacher to hold different opinions about the interpretation of the data and what should happen next. A skilled instructional coach will begin a dialogue process. An excellent way to think of a dialogue is described in the book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (1999) by William Isaacs, as "a conversation in which people think together in relationship." So a coach who is relying

Continued on page 50





on coaching partnership principles will see a difference of opinion as an opportunity for some reciprocal sharing and reflection. A coach and teacher will use effective communication skills of listening and asking questions. They must be willing to risk by sharing opinions and checking for points of disagreement and agreement. Below is a starter chart of some nonthreatening statements a coach can use to further the dialogue process through inquiry.

Both coach and teacher can come away from this process with new insight and learnings. The ability to engage in a productive dialogue comes with practice and application of partnership principles and effective questioning strategies. Through the dialogue process the coach and teacher will identify the next steps for the teacher to implement in the classroom.

What to Do	What to Say
Find out what data they are operating from.	"What leads you to conclude that?" "What data do you have for that?"
Use nonaggressive language.	Instead of "What do you mean?" or "What's your proof?" say, "Can you help me understand your thinking here?"
Draw out their reasoning.	"What is the significance of that?" "How does this relate to your other concerns?" "Where does your reasoning go next?"
Explain your reasons for inquiring.	"I'm asking you about your assumptions here because..."

Source: Senge, Peter, et.al. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. Doubleday, New York, 1994. Page 256.

.....The Utah Coaching Model

Response: Closing the Know-Do Gap

In the Summer 2007 issue of The Journal of Staff Development, Rick and Becky Dufour write, “The most pressing issue confronting educators is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of implementation, and a key to improving schools is taking purposeful steps to close the knowing-doing gap.” The final big idea in the Utah Coaching Model is Response—what will we do now that we know? The coach and teacher have built a relationship, met in a pre-conference, observed, shared data and engaged in dialogue. Now it’s time to respond. What should the coach do? What should the teacher do? How can the coach and teacher close the knowing-doing gap?

First it’s important to emphasize that both the coach and teacher have the opportunity to respond and reflect. When a coach moves through the components of coaching with a teacher, both the teacher and coach are learning. The teacher may be learning a new skill or practice, and the coach is gaining insights on how to improve the coaching process. A coach relies on professional judgment in deciding which approach best matches the teacher’s needs and will lead to growth. It is at this step that our approach differs from traditional cognitive coaching methods. If an instructive approach seems appropriate, the coach may offer suggestions on how to improve the teacher’s performance. The teacher then reflects on how these suggestions will impact his/her teaching. A coach considers an array of possible actions:

Do Nothing and Move On. In this instance the required response is recognizing that the teacher is doing a good job and only needs affirmation. The coach’s job is to confirm and verify that in this particular coaching sequence the teacher is performing to standard. Very little if any change is needed. The coach can provide a valuable second opinion based on observation data that good things are happening. It’s nice to have someone confirm you’re doing a good job teaching.

Kick It Up a Notch. Here the coach provides suggestions on how to improve teacher behavior and student learning. These recommendations may involve slight changes in instruction and delivery, suggestions on how to improve student discipline, or provide ideas from their own bag of tricks and past experience. These suggestions often begin with the words “Have you considered...” or “May I share an idea.” The recommendations will most often focus on improving the teacher’s performance in the Big Four (instruction, student behavior, content, or assessment).

Modeling/Co-Teaching. A coach might recognize that a teacher could benefit from guided practice. The suggestion could be made to provide modeling by co-teaching. “I do it; We do it; We do it; We do it; We do it; We do it; You do it.” With this response the coach offers to model the desired skill or techniques. Direct instruction is a

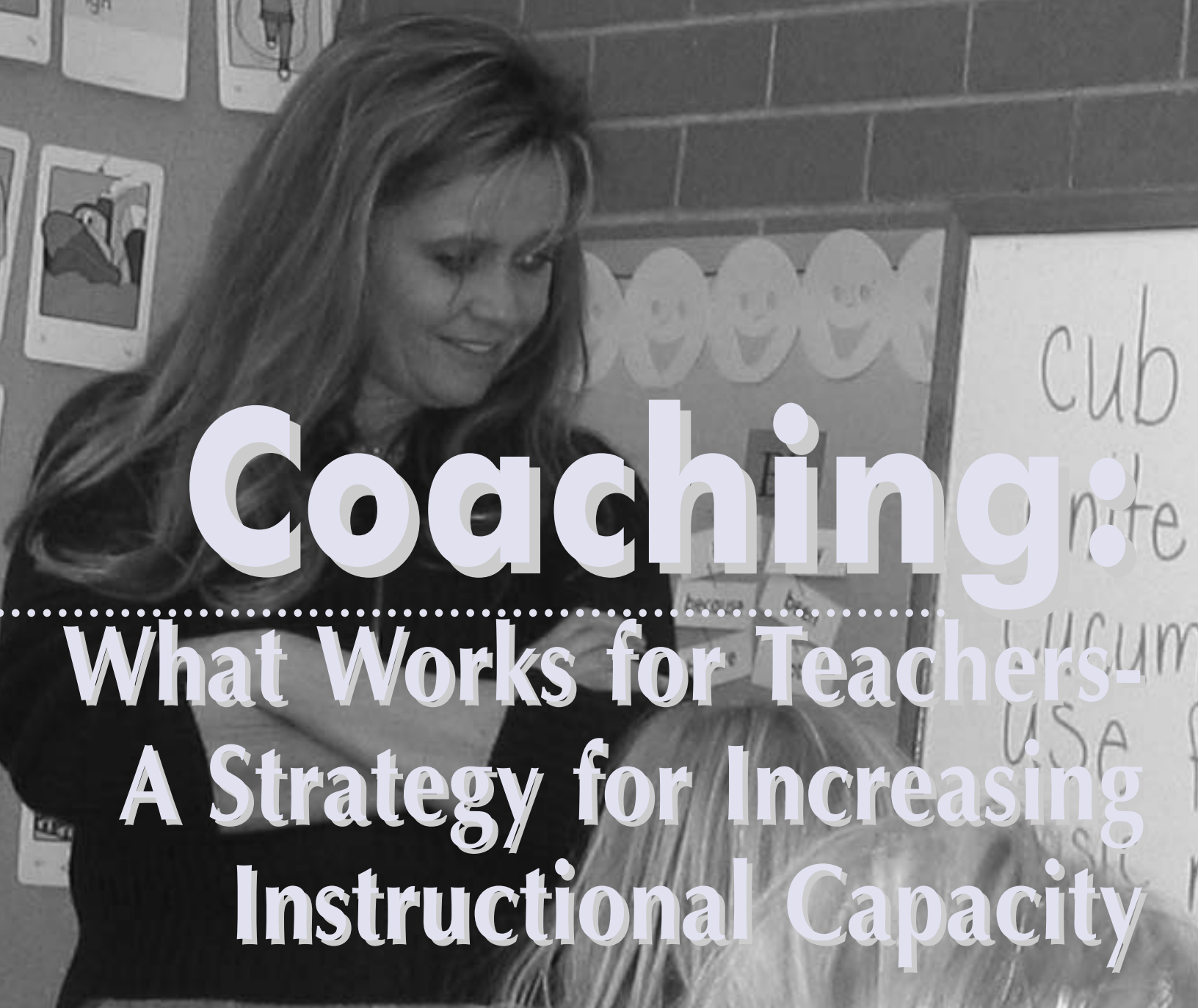
powerful method to gain mastery, and it works just as well for teachers and coaches. Unfortunately, many traditional staff development activities occur with minimal follow-up and educators have few if any opportunities to see the instructional practice performed with students in school settings. A co-constructed observation form would be developed in a pre-conference before the coach models a lesson. It is crucial that the instructional coach be fluent in the practice modeled. The teacher observes the lesson while completing the observation form. Finally, the coach and teacher meet to analyze and discuss the data from the lesson and plan for next steps.

Observe another master teacher. Occasionally the best example is another teacher down the hall. The coach may suggest they both observe a master teacher in action. During the lesson the coach can provide “color commentary” on the skills being demonstrated. These highlights can draw attention to subtle but effective teaching skills which may go unnoticed or both coach and teacher may use an observation form to take data which will be compared in a discussion following the observation.

Videotapes-watch the game film. Observing oneself in action provides valuable feedback for teachers. The coach may arrange for the teacher to be filmed so that the teacher can observe his or herself teaching an entire lesson. The teacher can observe how the students are responding to the instruction and the coach can identify strengths and weaknesses caught on videotape.

Finally, a coach may respond by providing additional materials or recommending professional development activities. Most schools and districts have in-service catalogs which offer professional development opportunities for teachers. It may be appropriate to recommend specific resources. For example, Linda Tilton’s book, *The Teacher’s Toolbox for Differentiating Instruction*, offers 700 strategies, tips, tools, and techniques that would be useful for a teacher.

Coaching offers sustained, authentic support from trusted colleagues. The value of coaching has been demonstrated through research and its benefit has been documented by teachers who both coached and received coaching. In the same Summer 2007 issue of The Journal of Staff Development, Richard Elmore phrased the need and benefit for coaching this way: “The problem (is that) there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and classrooms of other teachers in schools confronting similar problems.” Coaching is the vehicle which provides teachers the opportunity to help one another in a mutual effort to solve similar problems. Coaching, like the tide, raises all boats. ■



Coaching:

What Works for Teachers— A Strategy for Increasing Instructional Capacity

Introduction

I recall tennis team practices in my junior year of high school. My coach enabled my success by helping me strengthen my game, such as improving my approach shot and net play in doubles, through dialogue, modeling, and feedback before match time. The understanding my coach and I had was to increase my capacity to perform at my best.

Likewise, coaches use collaborative skills, modeling, and dialogue **with** teachers to: 1) engage in regular, reflective discussions about instruction (Guiney, 2001), 2) systematically help teachers reallocate their resources and improve their use of data in the service of improving instruction, and 3) participate in activities directly related to improving instruction. This includes one-on-one observation and feedback for teachers on instructional strategies and small group learning of new content and pedagogy (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). At the heart of all coaching work is increasing instructional capacity.

Why practice coaching as part of a professional development model?

Coaching changes teachers' practice and is professional development that is: 1) organized around the collective participation of teachers (from the same school, department, or grade levels), 2) focused on active learning activities (teachers are allowed to apply what they are learning), and 3) coherent (aligned with teachers' professional knowledge or community, as well as with state or district standards and assessments) (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, July 2003).

Moreover, "while not yet proven to increase student achievement, coaching does increase the instructional capacity of schools and teachers, a known prerequisite for increasing learning." (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. v)

Suraj Syal, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)

At the start of the 2006-2007 academic year, Millard School District leaders reviewed student outcome data, what teachers were saying regarding meeting the instructional needs of students who are at-risk, and district goals for professional development. It was determined that improving student performance, particularly for students of poverty, English language learners, and students with exceptional needs was a by-product of improving instruction. The district adopted a whole-school improvement approach. Specifically, 17 staff developers were identified in the district with the support of principals and were trained as coaches by the UPDC. These staff developers became the facilitators for cognitive coaching in their respective schools and experts in SIOP® strategies. These staff developers selected collaborating teachers at their respective schools and helped implement cognitive coaching in their schools. By the end of the year, over 100 cognitive coaching sessions had taken place district-wide (see "Thanks Coach", *Utah Special Educator*, May 2007). An evaluation of their efforts and discussion among these staff developers/coaches has been critical in continuing coaching. Their conclusions after one year are: 1) focus on instruction and on professional development to improve instruction; and 2) place an unwavering emphasis on integrating teachers' learning with teachers' practice, giving participants ongoing feedback, making these activities a whole-school, collegial endeavor and end teacher isolation.

In implementing this coaching model, Millard did not give up other approaches to teacher learning. They still hold large group instruction that introduces their teachers and principals to a new concept or activity. They still participate in intensive summer institutes that focus on content as well as pedagogy. However, the district's commitment and priority is to improve teachers' learning—and, in turn, their practice and student learning—"professional development that is closely and explicitly tied to teachers' ongoing work" (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 3). Coaching facilitates this priority, by enhancing the fidelity of implementation.

What has Millard School District learned this past year about coaching?

(Source: Conversations/written reflections from coaches and collaborating teachers) (Adapted from the Puget Sound Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, 2003)

Characteristics of a Good Peer Coach:

- Understands that he/she doesn't teach teachers, he/she "works with teachers"
- Is trustworthy, honors the agreements in the pre-conference during the post-conference
- Are comfortable and can offer differentiated models of effective practice
- Team player (willing to be coached)
- Communicates well, and listens, listens, listens (approachable and encouraging)
- Can show teachers how to replace what they are doing for something better, instead of presenting ideas as an "add-on"
- Gives teachers options and facilitates decision making
- Flexible disposition (knowing when to be calm, enthusiastic, encouraging)
- Committed to coaching and fidelity of implementation
- Recognized by staff as a trustworthy/outstanding teacher

- Has enough depth/breadth of knowledge **and** the collaborative skills to help teachers at various stages of teaching effectiveness
- Knows how to organize/structure a rich dialogue
- Provides a safe, risk-taking environment
- Fosters learning and leadership in others

Characteristics of a Teacher Ready To Be Coached:

- Has to see the need, purpose for this work
- Willing to be coached
- Understands the process of coaching and some experience with collaborative dialogue
- Comfortable making mistakes and asking questions
- Open to learning
- Helpful if teacher has an existing relationship with peer coach

Characteristics of a School Ready For Peer Coaching Professional Development Model:

- The staff has a "help each other" ethic
- School/District goals relating to instructing all students are in place
- Faculty can be observation phobic but need to be risk-takers
- Principal/district support in resources, time, and materials
- Norms of coaching established and agreed upon
- The school/district has a coaching plan
- Goals and evaluation tool tied together

Conclusion

Here's what we know about successful whole-school/whole-district approaches to professional development:

- many teachers are not prepared for the challenge of educating all, some, and few students to high levels,
- traditional workshops, conferences, and courses (line them up and tell them what we think) do not provide the ongoing, contextual support that teachers need to considerably improve teaching and learning,
- professional development must be stitched into the work routine of teachers, not tacked onto the work day or week.

Coaching is a promising, proven professional development model. Coaching develops the organizational capacity of whole schools (increasing leadership for instructional reform), and increases instructional capacity (one-on-one observation and feedback for teachers on instructional strategies and small group learning of new content and pedagogy) (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

The promise of coaching "translates into the sustained resources, opportunities and conditions necessary for teachers to reinvent their practice" (National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 1995). Another author states that coaching's "aim is really trying to connect to the teaching soul" (Guiney, 2001).

"Even Tiger Woods has a coach."-Kevin Feldman

Coaching has been, and will remain to be, an important component of training initiatives through the Utah Personnel Development Center. Coaching and SIOP® content sessions will be featured at the upcoming RTI for A.L.L. Conference September 27-28. For registration and information, go to: www.updc ■



**John Copenhaver, Director,
Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center**

The evolution of special education has been interesting to observe. We have left behind a period in the 1970s and 1980s when we were just securing physical access for students with disabilities. In the 1980s and 1990s, schools were concerned with paperwork and procedural safeguards. **Today, special education is experiencing a period of accountability at the State and school district levels.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act includes provisions for identifying, assessing, and serving the educational needs of children with disabilities. **The most important provision and accountability mechanism for the student is the “Individualized Education Program,”** or IEP. Each child whose disability affects his/her educational performance must have an IEP. The IEP serves as the blueprint that guides day-to-day instruction, support, and related services. The IEP states what services will be needed. The IEP also provides a structure that outlines how specially designed instruction is to be provided and how the IEP goals are related to the general education curriculum.

In short, the IEP is more than just a document necessary for federal and state compliance. **The IEP is a process** that provides a system for determining how needs will be met and documents the decisions made. The IEP process serves to enhance communication among parents and educators. It is an opportunity for everyone concerned about the child to meet together, set goals, and resolve differences. The IEP provides parents, teachers and other providers a means for writing a mutually agreed upon educational plan for the student.

The IEP serves as a communication vehicle among the parents, educators, the child, and other services providers. The IEP process allows parents and educators an opportunity to resolve conflicts. If a solution agreeable to both parties is not reached, parents are then guaranteed due process rights. In addition, the IEP is the document that sets forth in writing the resources committed to the child. The IEP is also a management tool for ensuring that the child is provided with special

Accountability at All Levels Student–State–School

education and related services appropriate to his or her needs. The IEP serves as a compliance monitoring document.

It may be reviewed by state and federal officials to determine whether the child is receiving the free appropriate public education agreed upon by the school and parent(s). Finally, the IEP is a tool that aids in evaluating the child's progress toward his or her annual goals. **IDEA 2004 extended accountability at the state and school district levels.** There is an important new requirement for State Education Agencies called **the State Performance Plan (SPP)**. Each state was required to develop and submit a SPP by December 2005. The SPP provides a strategic framework for the state to improve certain areas of special education, should improve services to infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

IDEA 2004 is the latest revision to federal special education law. There were several new additions to the law that should enhance positive results for students with disabilities.

The Part B SPP is made up of 20 performance indicators or areas that states need to collect data to determine their level of performance, set targets for improvement, and develop improvement strategies to improve state performance for students with disabilities. Part C has 14 indicators for infants and toddlers. Data is collected from school districts and early childhood programs and each year the state submits an **Annual Performance Report (APR)** that reports progress to the U.S. Department of Education on the 20 indicators. **Think of the SPP as the state's IEP and the APR as the annual review of the SPP.** The SPP is a six-year IEP for the state that improves accountability in special education and improves outcomes for students with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education requests states to get broad public input on the development and implementation of the SPP.

20 Indicators in the SPP

- Indicator 1** - Improving graduation rates for students with disabilities
- Indicator 2** - Decreasing dropout rates for students with disabilities
- Indicator 3** - Ensuring all students with disabilities participate in statewide or alternate assessments



- Indicator 4** - Reducing suspension and expulsion rates for students with disabilities
- Indicator 5** - Providing services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment
- Indicator 6** - Providing preschool children with disabilities services in the least restrictive environment
- Indicator 7** - Improving cognitive and social outcomes for preschool children with disabilities
- Indicator 8** - Improving parent involvement in their child's special education program
- Indicator 9** - Reducing disproportionality of cultural groups in special education

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Indicator 10 - Reducing the number of students from other cultures in certain disability categories

Indicator 11 - Improving efforts to locate, evaluate, and serve students with disabilities

Indicator 12 - Ensuring a smoother transition from preschool programs to school-based programs

Indicator 13 - Improving transition services for students with disabilities at the secondary level, i.e., 16+ years

Indicator 14 - Improving the outcomes for students moving from secondary to postsecondary activities

Indicator 15 - Making sure school districts correct non-compliance areas in the special education program within one year

Indicator 16 - Ensuring complaints filed by parents and other agencies are completed in a 60-day period

Indicator 17 - Ensuring due process hearing are completed in a 45-day period

Indicator 18 - Increasing the use of resolution sessions to resolve due process hearings

Indicator 19 - Increasing the use of mediation to resolve differences with the school

Indicator 20 - Making sure the data used by the State is valid, reliable, and accurate

Finally, IDEA 2004 requires the U.S. Department of Education to rate states according to their performance. IDEA 616(a)(1)(c)(i) and CFR 300.600(a) address the requirement for the U.S. Department of Education to place each state in one of four levels of determination based on information provided in the SPP through monitoring visits and other public information:

- Meets Requirements
- Needs Assistance
- Needs Intervention
- Needs Substantial Intervention

States are required to make determinations annual for their school district and early education programs. Most states make these determinations based upon the following criteria:

- Performance on certain SPP indicators
- Nature and length of time regarding any noncompliance
- Data-timely, reliable, and valid

Determination and Enforcement

Based upon the information provided in the state's APR, monitoring visits, and other information, each state and school district will be placed in one of the following determinations; each level has certain enforcement consequences.

Level 1 - Meets Requirements

The state and/or school district demonstrates the following:

- Substantial compliance on all compliance indicators
- Data is timely, valid, and reliable.
- Timely corrects noncompliance.

Level 2 - Needs Assistance

For two consecutive years, the state school district early childhood program does not demonstrate substantial compliance on one or more of the compliance indicators.

- One or more indicators does not have reliable data.
- Does not demonstrate timely correction of noncompliance.

Enforcement Activities

- Advise the state/school district early childhood program of sources of technical assistance.
- Direct use of state level/school district early childhood program level funds to correct problem.
- Identify state/school district early childhood program as high risk.

Level 3 - Needs Intervention

Means that the state/school district early childhood program has not demonstrated the following for three consecutive years:

- Substantial compliance on one or more of the compliance indicators

- One or more indicators without reliable data
- Correction of noncompliance

Possible Enforcement Activities

- Any from Needs Assistance level
- Prepare corrective action plan.
- Compliance agreement
- Withhold a percentage of federal funds.

The IEP serves as a communication vehicle among the parents, educators, the child, and other service providers.

Level 4 - Needs Substantial Intervention

Means that the state/school district early childhood program has failed to substantially comply, and those actions affect the core requirements of the program and services to children with disabilities. The state/school district early childhood program has informed the department it is unwilling to comply.

Enforcement Activities

- Any mentioned in levels 2-3
- Recover funds.
- Withhold further payments.
- Refer to Inspector General or enforcement action.

Stakeholder Involvement

It is important for the state to **include stakeholder involvement in the levels of determination process**. Most states will use their State Special Education Advisory Panels and/or Interagency Coordinating Councils (Part C).

Be a partner with the state in understanding and providing suggestions to improve data systems and performance on each of the 20 indicators. Remember, each time the performance improves, infants', toddlers', and childrens' results increase. ■



Hot, New & Very Cool!!

New face at the UPDC!

The Utah Personnel Development Center is pleased to introduce Cathy Longstroth, the newest member of its team. Prior to joining the UPDC, she worked for twenty-two years with children with significant disabilities and autism in Jordan and Murray Districts. Cathy has been a district Significant



Disabilities and Autism Specialist for six years. She has worked toward increasing effective instruction for students with special needs and implementing the instruction in the least restrictive environments. Cathy is looking forward to participating in professional learning communities that will increase the skills of teachers and improve the outcomes of students.

RTI for ALL, including A.L.L.

The Utah Personnel Development Center and the Utah State Office of Education present the RTI for A.L.L. (Academic Language Learners) Conference

When: September 27, 28, 2007 • **Where:** Provo Marriott Hotel, Provo Utah
Cost: free to Utah Educational Professionals • **Who should attend:** Special, Regular and ESL teachers, administrators, and related service providers who work with students with language learning needs. • **Information:** registration and conference flyer at: www.updc.org, click on upcoming conferences.

Wilson Reading Systems Overview and Intervention Workshop

The UPDC is sponsoring a two-day training opportunity in the Wilson reading program for Utah educational professionals.

When: October 1-3, 2007 • **Where:** Park City Marriott, Park City Utah
Cost: the training is free, but participants must provide their own instructional materials. • **Who should attend:** Utah special and regular educators and reading specialists involved in Tier II and Tier III reading interventions.
Information and registration online at: <http://158.91.165.5/> or contact Amber Landward at: 801-272-3431 amberl@updc.org

The Utah Association of School Psychologists Fall Conference

Anxiety and OCD in school-aged children: Early Recognition and Effective Intervention. Presented by Aureen Pinto Wagner, Ph.D.

When: Friday, October 5, 2007, 8am-4pm • **Where:** Hilton Salt Lake City Center Hotel, 255 S. West Temple, SLC, Ut. • **Cost:** UASP Member- \$95 (Before 9/24); \$110 (After 9/24) • Non-UASP Member- \$130 (Before 9/24); \$145 (After 9/24) • **Who should attend:** All professionals working with school aged children with anxiety and/or OCD.
Information: www.utahschoolpsychology.org

Free Parent Workshop: Helping Children Cope with Anxiety

Presented by the Utah Association of School Psychologists and Aureen Pinto Wagner, Ph.D. Dr. Wagner will discuss various forms of anxiety including worry, separation anxiety, school refusal, perfectionism, test anxiety, social anxiety, panic and fears after disaster and tragedies. She will share guidance and strategies for home and school.

When: Thursday, October 4, 2007, 7pm-9pm. • **Where:** Granite District Offices, 2500 S. State Street. Room D102. • **Cost:** FREE
Light refreshments will be served prior to the workshop. **RSVP requested for count:** Holly 464-2033 or hollyg@usdb.org

Utah Association For Bilingual Education Conference: Empowering Communities Through Transforming Education

Keynote Speaker: Hector Montenegro, Superintendent of Ysleta Independent School District • **When:** October 12-13, 2007 • **Where:** Granite School District, SLC, Utah • **Cost:** 1 or 2 day registration cost options
Information: Contact Sarah at: (801) 940-7946 or sarahroberts411@gmail.com

Spotlight On Autism Conference

Intermountain Conference for Educators, Parents and Professionals, featuring Sally Ozonoff, Early Diagnosis of Autism, and the COMPASS parent-teacher model • **When:** November 9th and 10th, 2007 • **Where:** Larry H. Miller Center, SLC • **Registration:** www.autismaccess.com
Information: Kim Moody at: autismaccess@comcast.net

Utah 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction Approved!

Utah's 3 Tier model of reading instruction was approved and is scheduled to be distributed some time this fall. The final draft and a training PowerPoint presentation is available for download at:
http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang_art/elem/ThreeTier.htm

USOE awarded new mental health grant!

UBI LINKS: School-based Mental Health

What is UBI Links: This 18 month award will focus on: infrastructure, relationship building, and training. It is designed to increase students' access to quality mental health care through integration of schools and mental health systems in Utah.

Enhancing collaboration between schools and mental health service systems

1. Providing cross system and cross-disciplinary training
2. Developing a common vision and terminology
3. Developing a standardized protocol for screening and referral

How are we working with Utah Behavior Initiatives Schools?

- Targeting "Graduated and Exemplar" UBI schools for integration of mental health services

- Targeting Tier 2 and Tier 3 UBI schools for screening and training.

How are we working with public mental health agencies?

- Through the Utah Child and Adolescent Network (UT CAN) and the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) public mental health agencies have recognized a need for school-based mental health services. They have asked for assistance from the UBI-Links Grant to assist in their collaboration with the schools and districts in their areas.

Contact: Heidi Mathie, Grant Coordinator, heidi.mathie@schools.utah.gov, 801-638-7784

Conference: Effective Writing Strategies for Older Students (Grades 4-12) Sponsored by USOE, University of Utah and UPDC

Where: University Park Marriott • **When:** October 26, 2007 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. • **Keynote Speakers:** Steve Graham and Karen Harris (noted national researchers on writing) • **Cost:** No Cost
Information: Breakout Sessions, Continental Breakfast, Lunch included, Space Limited • **Online Registration:** available September 10, 2007 at www.updc.org

Service Directory.....

Utah State Office of Education

Special Education Services

- Nan Gray • Director of Special Education.....538-7757 • nan.gray@schools.utah.gov
- Peggy Milligan • Coordinator of Special Education.....538-7589 • peggy.milligan@schools.utah.gov
- Bruce Schroeder • Specialist, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)
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- Carol Anderson • Specialist, Emotional Disturbance/Mental Health.....538-7727 • carol.anderson@schools.utah.gov
- Lisa Arbogast • Coordinator, Federal and State Compliance Officer.....538-7568 • lisa.arbogast@schools.utah.gov
- Wendy Carver • Specialist, Assessment and Accountability.....538-7639 • wendy.carver@schools.utah.gov
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- Janet Gibbs, Specialist, Literacy, SLD, Access to the General Curriculum.....538-7716 • janet.gibbs@schools.utah.gov
- Susan Loving • Specialist, Transition, OT/PT Services.....538-7645 • susan.loving@schools.utah.gov
- Cal Newbold • Specialist, Fiscal and Data Issues.....538-7724 • cal.newbold@schools.utah.gov
- Connie Nink • Specialist, Preschool.....272-3431 • connie.nink@schools.utah.gov
- Jocelyn Taylor • Specialist, TBI, Autism, Communication Disorders.....538-7726 • jocelyn.taylor@schools.utah.gov
- Christene Timothy • Specialist, Severe Disabilities, Vision Impaired and Hearing Impaired.....
.....538-7576 • chris.timothy@schools.utah.gov

Utah Personnel Development Center

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- Kit Giddings Ext. 209.....kitg@updc.org
- Michael Herbert Ext. 207.....michaelh@updc.org
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- Suraj Syal Ext. 247.....surajs@updc.org

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- Bruce Schroeder, Project Director, Ext. 212.....bruces@utahsignal.org
- Dan Morgan, Ext. 216.....danm@utahsignal.org

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- Helen Post, Director.....helenpo@provo.edu

Utah ABC Triangle

